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The Struggle for the Past: Historiography Today

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Editorial

The struggle for the past is a perennial one. The memory of the past serves wide varieties of purpose in the life of peoples and nations. Today in our country, the political battleground has shifted to history. The representation of the past has become a political agenda. Whether it is Aryan-Dravidian racial divide or Ramajanamabhumi-Babri Masjid issue, we are confronted with approaches to history centered on power.

In the quest for power and its maintenance, we note how even the basic method and parameters of the discipline of history in terms of presenting and interpreting evidence is flouted. Rewriting of the past and presenting them as history texts in schools is an attempt to invade the cultural sphere and impose a communal agenda. The dominant historiography is one in which there has taken place a shift from truth to power. We need to awaken to these new developments and critically participate in the ongoing battle for the past. Much of the future shape of the nation will depend upon how we construct the past.

The current situation calls for a basic re-thinking on historiography and explore alternative historiographies. In this regard, it is highly important that we make way for the voices of the marginalized groups and their modes of representing the past. One thing that strikes us is that for the poor and marginalized it is not the temporal sequence but the *spatiality* which is of primary importance. Therefore their narratives may appear from a temporal perspective as fragments, but in reality it is the *space* which holds together their stories.

From the experience of the marginalized emerges a pattern of history which is relational and humanizing in stark contrast to the paradigm modernity has brought about. The two contributions, one on Kerala and the other on Kancheepuram district of Tamilnadu give

us deeper insights for the construction of alternative historiographies, resistant and liberative in nature. The alternative historical reconstruction of their past by the marginalized presents a challenge to the dominant model of historiography and an incisive critique of the power intertwined with it.

Re-thinking historiography leads us also to concentrate on the *uneventful* everyday life of interaction and transactions among peoples and groups through the centuries and millennia. This would help us overcome the reification of the past which leads to religious and communal conflicts. Finally, it is important that the practice of historiography be treated not only as a matter of knowledge but also as an issue of ethics, vision and hope. This present issue of *Jeevadhara* weaves together some of these thoughts.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all the contributors to this issue of *Jeevadhara*. *Thambi Jose Maliekal*, my doctoral student, has been in constant interaction with me in designing and preparing this issue for which I thank him.

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Alternative Historiographies: Changing Paradigms of Power

K. N. Panikkar

The author, a well-known historian, formerly professor of history at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, is presently the Vice-Chancellor of Sri Sankara Sanskrit University, Kalady, Kerala. In the present contribution he calls for a reaffirmation of the fundamental methodological concerns of the historians' craft, as an antidote to the present day tendency to mythifying history, and tailoring the historical consciousness, through well organized, and state sponsored channels of communication. After taking a detour of the growth of the different trends of historiographies in India, the author concludes the article, by tracing the agenda for a new alternative historiography of resistance. The software of this creative, critical and constructive enterprise is to enter the hitherto unexplored area of cultural history, thus recovering the meaning of the implicit and silent forms of resistance, and contextualising it in relation to social forces.

History as a discipline, it should be obvious to its practitioners, is now facing an unprecedented crisis. Exploring the course of historical investigation and its methodological concerns by a group of professional historians is therefore a welcome initiative. The construction of History, particularly at the popular level, is now being undertaken without any regard to the tenets of the discipline and as a result the historical consciousness in society is increasingly becoming distanced from methodological concerns. As a result myths and fables are paraded in the grab of history. Political interests, rather than historical scholarship are its motivations. The famous Hindi writer, Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi, had cautioned us as early as 1930 that 'even if we lose freedom, we

should not let our history go away. Because if history is intact, the lost freedom can be won back, but if it is destroyed, even if we manage to regain freedom, it will be possible only through great difficulties.' The centrality of history to the national life that Dwivedi so eloquently expressed is true of the social sciences as well. That is why Amartya Sen, in his recent address to the Indian History Congress expressed his apprehension about the current tendency to mythify history. To professional historians, it is a matter of grave concern. Yet, they can hardly intervene, as they do not have much access to the channels of communication that would enable them to influence the civil society. In comparison, the attempts to mythify the past have a well-organised network of communication, which is constantly engaged in transforming the existing historical consciousness of the people. The only mode open to historians to safeguard the discipline is to reaffirm the fundamental concerns of the historians' craft. Occasions like this when professional historians get together to take stock of the state of the art provide an opportunity to deliberate upon the nature and implications of the challenge, the discipline is currently facing.

History like all other disciplines has its own method, which the practitioners of history is expected to follow scrupulously, regardless of whichever interpretative mode they adopt. This is true not only of academic history but also of popular history. A departure from this principle tends to undermine the integrity of the discipline. The methodological commitment is the touchstone of all historical reconstructions, even if undertaken from different ideological pre-suppositions. The crisis in Indian historiography today is mainly because of the state-sponsored attempt to undermine the commonly accepted norms of the discipline. The deliberations of a seminar on historiography in which professional historians are participating are likely to foreground the pitfalls inherent in these tendencies.

This is not to suggest that historical disciplines are to be pursued in isolation. On the contrary the knowledge of history is very much in the public domain and is a field of contestation. This is so partly because the myriad ways in which history and historiography are embedded in the exercise, perpetuation and struggle for power. Therefore history is invoked as a source of legitimacy and dominance. At the same time it also serves as an ideology of resistance. The differences in historiographies, at least some of them, are not merely based on academic

and intellectual differences but are as much reflections of the struggle for power. That in fact is the politics of writing history. Although it is quite common to talk about the objectivity of history, which a historian attempts to achieve within the limitations of the discipline, there are no historical writings not imbued with some elements of politics. All historiographies, both mainstream and the alternative are therefore embedded in the struggle for power.

The growth of historiography in India during the last two hundred years comprehends within it the changing contours of power and politics in Indian society. The bulk of the early writings on India authored by the colonial administrators and ideologues were intertwined with the interests of the colonial rule. One of its aims was to delegitimise the precolonial, even if colonial strategies of domination were not within an element of appropriation of the 'native' past. The familiar themes of colonial historiography like the despotism of India rulers and the characterization of the pre-colonial era as a dark age are integral to the structuring of power. The racial explanation of the British conquest of India and the debilities of Indian character, which the colonial historiography so eloquently narrated, are with the same intent. The Indians lost out to the Europeans, it is argued, not because of the technological superiority of the latter, but because of the racial inferiority of the former. The innumerable histories of British military conquest bears testimony to this. What they highlighted as reason for British success was the European character in contrast to that of the Indian. James Mill sought to convey this contrast through an imaginary incident, which underlined the nobility of the Europeans, and the deviousness of the native. In a way, Orientalism also performed the same function, as invoking the past achievements helped to focus on the dismal present and thus indirectly rationalising the colonial intervention. David Kopf's study of the influence of Orientalism on the Bengal Renaissance may be off the mark on many counts, but it rightly underlines how the Orientalist ideas played a decisive role in the making of the political perspectives of the intelligentsia in Bengal. A whole generation of Bengal intelligentsia was nurtured on the intellectual output of the Fort William College. After all it was the colonial logic of contemporary backwardness, which the intelligentsia invoked to lend legitimacy to colonial rule as evident from the concept of Divine Dispensation.

A central theme of colonial historiography was the internal differences, based both on caste and religion. It viewed Indian society as an agglomeration of religious and caste communities antagonistic to each other. James Mill's oft-quoted periodisation of Indian history, in terms of Hindu and Muslim periods is a reflection of this religious view of society. The nexus of this historiographical perspective with the exercise of colonial power is far too evident. The political strategy of conquest was based on an exploitation of mutual rivalries and internal differences. Once the Empire was established, the British extended this strategy to social and political management, invoking the communitarian logic as central to the Indian social reality. The changing attitude towards the Muslims is a good example of this policy. Immediately after the Revolt of 1857, the official policy was quite hostile to the Muslims who, it was believed, were responsible for organising the revolt. When their national movement gained in strength, the Muslims were favourably treated and were encouraged to take a separatist position. The British influence at the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, the Simla deputation in 1905 and the granting of separate electorates in 1909 are examples. Thus colonialism exploited social divisions and formulated a policy of counterpoising one community against the other. It was a part of a larger design intended to ensure the perpetuation of colonial power. An unfortunate fall out of this policy was the accentuation of social divisions and differences. The colonial historiography faithfully articulated this communitarian view, which continued to be influential, though in an altered form, in the neo-colonial revisionist history.

The nationalist historiography sought to create an alternative to the colonial by trying to disprove these assumptions. It tried to underplay the internal differences in order to unify the people in their fight against colonialism. The concept of unity in diversity was a construct invoked to serve this need. But the nationalist historiography had to do much more than discontinuing and contesting the colonial; it had to help the nation to come to its own, culturally, socially, economically and politically. The mission of nationalist historiography therefore was to construct the nation, exploring its historically inherited constitutive elements, and thus disengaging its personality from the sense of inferiority complex, colonialism imbued in the minds of the subjected. As a result the nationalist historiography invoked the past, often

romanticizing it, and identifying in it almost every achievement of the colonizer.

The nationalist historiography had two streams: one revivalist and the other eclectic. The former tended to go back to the past identified with the Hindu, in search of the roots of the nation, whereas the latter viewed the nation as a confluence of various cultural and political streams. The first gave the ideological legitimacy to religious nationalism while the second was at the heart of secular nationalism. The divide is in a way true even today, with the revivalist trend merging with the communal historiography and the eclectic with the secular.

The cultural past that the nationalist historiography tried to reclaim was clearly Brahmanical and upper caste. The culture of those outside this circle did not attract any attention. The oppressed and the marginalised did not enter into its reckoning and their voices were conspicuously absent. This was an indication of power perspective inherent in the nationalist historiography. The alternative to colonial historiography that the nationalist historiography posited was rooted in a contest for power in which the caste and class elites were involved and into which the labouring classes had not entered yet. Therefore their interests and aspirations were outside the purview of the nationalist historiography. The nationalist historiography was hence an inadequate representation of the interests of the nation.

The main strength of nationalist historiography was its economic critique of colonialism. It exposed the ugly face of colonial exploitation and demonstrated how the nation has been denuded of its wealth. But the nation was conceived as a homogeneous social entity and hence the internal contradictions and differentiations were almost overlooked. That the nation cannot come to its own without resolving the internal forms of exploitation did not figure in this analysis. The nationalist historiography thus reflected primarily the concern of those classes who were struggling to wrest power from the colonial rule.

A different power perspective informs the Marxist historiography. Unlike the nationalist historiography, it seeks to disaggregate the nation in terms of its class components, highlighting thereby the contradictions within the society. The analysis of contradictions revolves around power and powerlessness and their mutual relationship culminating in class struggles. Focussing on the myriad ways in which class struggle is

articulated in society, its concern mainly with the question of the labouring classes striving to gain power, either successfully or otherwise. But this is a process, which is not intelligible without knowing how the power is exercised and contested and that in fact is the problem with which the Marxist historiography has been concerned with. Such studies have been enriched by the incorporation of the issue raised by social mediation and ideological interventions. As recently pointed out by a scholar, 'the Marxist historiography represented a challenge to non-Marxist historiography less on political grounds than because they questioned a traditional event- and person – oriental history and called for greater attention to social context and change'

The Marxist historiography emerged as a powerful alternative during the post-nationalist period, not because of the thematic shift alone but more due to the methodological advance. While the colonial and the nationalist historiographies shared an empiricist mode, the Marxist method was informed by a theoretical sensitivity, which enabled the conceptualisation of the processes of social transformation. As a result, the Indian historiography underwent a paradigm change, introducing thereby a quantitative advance in historical writing. A new way of interrogating the historical reality thus came into being. The engagement with theoretical problems, however, had its own pitfalls. The base-superstructure model, for instance, considerably restricted, at least in the beginning, the study of cultural and ideological issues. They suffered from a reductionist perspective, relegating the problems of ideology and culture to the status of epi-phenomena. Such a tendency continued to be influential for a long time, despite major advances in these fields in other parts of the world, which recognised their internal dynamics, within the ambit of the overall structure.

This weakness of the Marxist practice has led to an assumption and criticism that the Marxist method is incapable of interrogating the complex Indian social reality constituted, such as it is, by overlapping, complementary, as well as contradictory structural categories. That the Marxist historiographical practice has rarely addressed this question in an effective manner is undeniably true. The caste-class relationship is generally raised as the Gordian knot. Whether this is because of the inability of the Marxist method or due to the limitations of Marxist practice is a question that needs well-informed discussion. This criticism has three sources. First, an inadequate sensitivity to potentialities and

possibilities within the Marxist theory and a judgement based on past practice. Secondly, it also suffers from a relative indifference to the advances in Marxist scholarship outside India, particularly on culture and ideology. And thirdly, perhaps more importantly, as a part of the ideological efforts in several Western institutions, to marginalise, if not eliminate, Marxist categories from social science analysis. All these three seem to converge on the alternatives to Marxist method currently being pursued in India, particularly by those who subscribe to the post-structuralist, post-modernist theories, which, as Lawrence Stone has recently pointed out, proceed from the conviction 'that a coherent scientific explanation of change in the past is no longer possible'. Holding that there are no criteria for truth in historical narratives, it is argued that historical narratives are verbal fictions, the contents of which are *as much invented as found* and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with sciences'. There are no historical accounts from the early to the present that do not recognise both the literary aspects of historical narratives and the role of imagination in constructing them. Nevertheless, they also provided insights into a past that is not imaginary but real in which the actors were human beings who left behind the record of their life. Natalie Davis has rightly pointed out that invention occupies a crucial place in the reconstruction of the past, but at the same time, the invention is not arbitrary creation of the historian, but follows the voices of the past, as they speak to us through the sources. A total objective reality may as well be allusive as far as historian is concerned – the difficulties in comprehending the nature of truth is a philosophical question as old as the Mahabharata in Indian thought – yet the reconstruction of the past, despite the limitations of the discipline, is not altogether impossible.

The subaltern history was conceived as an alternative to all existing historiographies – the colonial, nationalist and Marxist. Dismissing all of them as elitist in character the subaltern history set out to recover the voice of the subaltern, a social group identified as representing the 'demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those who are described as the elite'. The people's history – the history of the oppressed and the exploited – was nothing new in Indian historiography; the concern of the Marxist historians has been precisely that. What could have distinguished the subaltern history from the earlier genres of people's history was a qualitative change in its methodology

by ushering in a history from below. This however was not to be, as most of the essays collected in the series failed to recover the voice of the marginalised by using unconventional sources drawn from Indian languages. In fact, two major marginalised groups in Indian society, the dalits and women, hardly appeared in these studies. Moreover, despite the obvious inspiration from the writings of Antonio Gramsci, the entire project lacked theoretical coherence and conceptual precision. It is therefore not surprising that the project soon took a linguistic turn and lost much of its radical rhetoric.

A positive trend in Indian historiography is the emergence of dalit and women's history. The former contests the social power of the upper castes and the latter the patriarchal authority of the male. The Indian historiography, whichever genre it belonged to, have been silent, either consciously or unconsciously, about the history of these groups. Ranjit Guha, in his introduction to the Subaltern studies has stated that the 'history of Indian nationalism has been written up as a sort of spiritual biography of the Indian elite'. In fact the entire history of India has been written as the saga of the upper castes and the male heroes. The history of the Indian Renaissance, for instance, has been encapsulated in the socio-religious efforts of upper caste leaders from Rammohan to Dayanand. For a long time, people like Jyotibha Phule, Narayana Guru, Ayyankali or Ramaswamy Naicker did not figure at all. Pandita Ramabhai or Tarabhai Shide is still not included. This is true of the national movements as well. Ambedkar has only begun to be noticed, thanks to the attempts to recover the role of the dalits in order to gain their rightful place in the national life. In the light of the recent assertion of the dalits, it is not surprising that the ideologues of the upper caste interests like Arun Shourie have tried to denigrate Ambedkar and Periyar.

Despite the differences in approach and method, these historiographies, except the colonial, shared a secular view of history. Even the colonial historiography was more religious than communal. An alternative to the secular historiography, in the form of communal history has been in the making for a long time. Its origin can be traced to the revivalism of the nineteenth century and the later quest to define the characteristics of nationalism, in religious terms. Such a historiographical trend reflected the process of communalization occurring among both the Hindu and Muslim communities, during the course of the colonial period. It drew inspiration from a concept of

religious cultural nationalism advocated by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and Mohammad Ali Jinnah. The Hindu communal historiography traced the nationhood to an ancient glorious Hindu past, whereas the Muslim communal historiography confined it to the period of Islamic heritage. The former is now being advocated and propagated in India by the Hindu communal political and cultural formations and the latter has become the official history in Pakistan.

An early example of Hindu communal historiography is the writings of V.D.Savarkar. In a comprehensive interpretation of Indian history entitled, *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History*, Savarkar viewed the past in purely communal terms. He conceptualised the history of India as a heroic saga of the struggle of the Hindus against those who came from outside. The last such struggle was the national movement, which was hailed as the culmination of the long drawn out efforts to eliminate the enemy and to realise the nation. This interpretation gives credence to the notion of the outsider as enemy that now forms the core of communal mythology. The rewriting of history aimed at establishing the nativity of a major section of those who constitute the Hindus today is intended to demarcate the outsider from the nation.

Among the many functions the study of the past performs, its ability to create a consciousness of the common cultural and political heritage, and thus to create the ability to imagine the nation is very important. Among the many factors that enable the imagination, history has a central role. What the communal historiography is attempting is to redefine the nation in majoritarian terms. This is a political project, rather than an intellectual or academic engagement. In other words, it is part of a struggle for power, in which the cultural, social and political interests of the upper caste Hindus are at stake. The communal historiography, therefore attempts to marginalise dalit history, debunks women's history as western and Marxist history, as anti-national.

The historiography, I have argued, is a field of power play. There is politics behind all writings of history, consciously or unconsciously pursued. What is often described and advocated, as neutral history is a myth. But then the construction of history, whatever the interpretative structure, and despite the blurring of the disciplinary boundaries in social sciences, has necessarily to respect the fundamental tenets of the discipline, in order to qualify for the status of history. The communal

history is far removed from this principle and therefore belongs more to the realm of myth than to history. The alternative that communal history proffers is often described as a distortion; in fact it is a denial of history. The communal historiography is indeed a departure from all historiographical traditions, except the colonial, but a departure, which is methodologically unsound and thematically retrogressive. All changes are not necessarily progressive.

In the present intellectual and cultural climate in India, a major desideratum is the historiography of resistance, both the articulate and hidden forms of resistance. What have received attention so far, particularly in the Marxist, dalit and women's histories, are the more articulate forms of resistance, like movements, revolts and protests. The implicit and silent forms of resistance have not attracted the same scholarly treatment. This is to a large measure due to the relatively underdeveloped state of cultural history, as silent resistance generally manifest in the domain of culture. Recovering the meaning of silence along with the articulate, and contextualising it in relation to the social forces should therefore form the agenda of a new alternative historiography, distinct from the textual analyses that currently crowd the cultural studies. It is hoped that it will posit an alternative both to the communal and the invented histories.

Contemporary Challenges to the Idea of History

Ananta Kumar Giri

Dr. Ananta Kumar Giri, senior fellow at the Madras Institute of Development Studies, in this important contribution, undertakes the task of a foundational critique of history, as an enterprise of knowledge. Unlike in the dominant, but reductive paradigm of modernity, knowledge has to do, not only with power and reason, but also with vision and hope. This entails a self-critique and introspection on the part of the practitioner of history, who is bewitched by the modernity's privileging of time over space. We have to become sensitive to both time and space, by undertaking an epistemological and ontological border crossing, giving rise to a new, and alternative vision of history as relational, differentiated, dialectical and above all humanizing. This ultimately leads to the nurturance of spaces of hope, reconciliation and human possibilities, over against the faceless march of globalizing capital, along with the all gobbling, dehumanizing and totalizing Leviathan – the market.

The Problem

In his recent inaugural address at the 61st session of Indian History Congress at Calcutta, Amartya Sen develops and defends a view of history as an enterprise of knowledge. Sen takes issue with postmodern critiques of knowledge in general and historical knowledge in particular and argues that though all of us have our own perspectives and points of view, yet it does not preclude the possibility of arriving at “an integrated and coherent picture”.¹ Sen goes on to argue: “... describing the past is like all other reflective judgements, which have to take note of demands of veracity and the discipline of knowledge. The discipline includes the study of knowledge formation, including the history of science and

also the history of history".² But though Sen is open to history of science in his engagement, he does not engage himself with history of history. Sen does not look into the issue of cultural presuppositions of the enterprise of knowledge we call history. Nor does Sen look into the different domains in the enterprise of history such as history as power, history as reason and history as vision. It is Amartya Sen who nearly twenty years ago in his Tanner Lectures on Human values had stirred our mind with the question equality of what. In the same vein, if history is an enterprise of knowledge then the key question is knowledge of what? Does history as an enterprise of knowledge deal with knowledge of power, of reason or of spiritual vision? A related question here is: Whose knowledge? Is it the knowledge of the sovereign or subaltern? While the rise of subaltern studies has brought to the center the question of whose knowledge, in this paper I want to argue that knowledge of what is also equally important in thinking about history. I want to argue, building on Immanuel Kant and Michel Foucault, that knowledge is concerned not only with power and reason but also with hope. To put it in the words of R. Sundar Rajan: "There are three thematic principles of history. History as Power, History as Reason and History as Vision"³. These three themes correspond to three questions Kant had asked us long ago--what can we know, what should we will and what may we reasonably hope for but unlike Kant and Sen, it is difficult for us to arrive at a unity among these three domains of knowledge. As an enterprise of knowledge, history deals with all the three domains--Power, Reason and spiritual vision or politics, critical understanding and hope but the knowledge emerging from one domain may not be compatible with another. For instance, when we look at Indian society and history, we see that the knowledge of its politics and social system is incompatible with the knowledge of its spiritual vision. While the historical knowledge of politics and society in India gives us a picture of caste system and oppressive kings the knowledge of the spiritual vision gives us a story of the quest for spiritual self-realization and the establishment of a dignified society. But in this field of plural knowledge, there is also a dialectic at work but Sen's view of history as an enterprise of knowledge is not sensitive to this mutually transformative dialectic between power / knowledge and spiritual visions. Sen also does not interrogate the foundations of history itself as an enterprise of knowledge.

In this paper, I undertake the task of a foundational critique of history

as an enterprise of knowledge by discussing the work of G.C. Pande and Ashis Nandy who draw our attention to ethnocentrism in modernist history and historiography. Then I discuss the issue of space and time by arguing how modernity privileges time--a teleological time over space. I discuss how the temporalization of space in modernity is crucial to capitalism, imperialism and colonialism and how history's uncritical preoccupation with linear time makes it part of what Ashish Nandy ⁴ calls "the imperialism of categories". But the progression from temporalization of space to spatialization of time gives us two contradictory though interrelated processes--spatialization of time as speed, a process where both time and space run ever faster for the realization of capitalist profit and spatialization of time as a space of resistance (also of hope and alternative imagining and becoming) where spaces refuse to be swallowed up by the teleological time of both the modernizing nation-state and the dictatorship of the proletariat. In talking about space and time I discuss both Marx and Heidegger, particularly Heidegger's distinction between "clock time" and "lived time", and between building and dwelling. I plead that history should be self-critical about the modernist privileging of time over space and now take part in both an ontological and epistemological border crossing by being attentive to both space and time and by striving for a "spatiotemporal utopianism"⁵ where exists not only a creative interpenetration between space and time but between past, present and future. As Dallmayr presents the outline of such a creative historiography, building on Heidegger: "At the interstices of past and future lies the lived present--a present conceived no longer as an indefinite Now-point, but as a task to be shouldered by existence. Nurtured by the past and illumined by future possibilities, the present becomes the locus of practical engagement and resolute care".⁶

Contemporary Challenges to the Idea of History: Some Foundational Critiques

G.C. Pande is a thoughtful interlocutor of contemporary India, who urges us to be sensitive to the problem of cultural presuppositions in historiographies of civilizations. For Pande modern historiography is essentially ethnocentric, i.e., western and its two presuppositions are: (a) human civilization constitutes a linear, evolutionary process and (b) the basic feature of human civilization is the power it gives man "to

control his physical environment enabling him to increase his success in the struggle for existence and the search for maximizing satisfactions".⁷ But Pande asks us to ponder: "But is the idea of linear evolution of human civilization a generalization established by historical inquiry or is it just a hypothesis?"⁸ For Pande, "The prevailingly modern western view as reflected in contemporary historiography of civilization is to make scientific humanism the real value of all civilizations. The human self is here regarded as social and rational".⁹ But can these cultural presuppositions about man and society be universalized? For Pande, "Positive knowledge and practical skill have always been prized and cultivated but in the earlier ages they were prized within the bounds of cultural ethos which looked beyond the merely earthy life of man to his heavenly destiny".¹⁰ But the modern historian "even though he is not a scientist, finds it incumbent on him to endorse not merely the empirical truth of natural sciences but also an attitude of skepticism towards traditional beliefs".¹¹ For Pande, "This is simply a consequence of the historian's acceptance of values which define modern culture, it is not relevant to his task as a historian pure and simple".¹²

So, in being engaged with the enterprise of knowledge one has to take note of different values rather than just assert one value, i.e. modern Enlightenment values of self and society. But the existence of plural values with which history as an enterprise of knowledge has to deal with does not create a situation of radical incommensurability. But to overcome the apparent and existential incommensurability, if any, what is needed is not only "positional objectivity" but also a participation in different worldviews and value themes in a spirit of Gadamerian fusion of horizons. In the words of Pande: "The plurality of cultures and relativity of values does not, however, mean any radical incommensurability in the sense of mutual non-comprehension or non communication. The task of the historiography of civilization ought to be to provide a bridge for genuine cross-cultural understanding".¹³

Ashis Nandy also raises some foundational questions to the enterprise of history. For Nandy, "... the aim of history is to unravel secular processes and the order that underlie the manifest realities of past times".¹⁴ As an "authentic progeny of seventeenth century Europe, history fears ambiguity".¹⁵ Nandy laments that in contemporary

epistemology, “there is no fundamental skepticism towards history as a mode of world construction”.¹⁶ For Nandy, “History not only exhausts our idea of the past, it also defines our relationship with our past selves”.¹⁷

But this triumph of history when “historical consciousness owns the globe”¹⁸ is recent and Nandy urges us to realize that even in modern West not so long ago “historical consciousness had to co-exist with other modes of experiencing and constructing the past”.¹⁹ All societies do not have the same mode of constructing the past and here Nandy makes a broad distinction between historical and ahistorical societies around the distinction between myth and history. For Nandy, while “historical consciousness cannot take seriously the principle of forgetfulness” myths work through “the principle of principled forgetfulness”.²⁰ While history provides certitudes, myths, legends and *puranas* provide us a painful awareness of contingency. This is easily understood when we look at the epic of *Mahabharata*, which does not give us any final winner or loser but deep pangs and suffering. There is also a difference here with regard to time. For Nandy, “traditional India lacks the Enlightenment’s concept of history” and the “construction of time in South Asia may or may not be cyclical, but it is rarely linear or unidirectional”.²¹ Attitude to time “including the sequencing of the past, the present, and the future—is not given or pre-formatted. Time in much of South Asia is an open-ended enterprise”.²² It is this open-ended nature of time and the interpenetration between time and eternity that modern historical consciousness finds puzzling and threatening. The historically minded are also hostile to horizons of transcendence intimately invoked in non-historical societies.

The nationalist interlocutors of India in nineteenth century lamented that India lacked a historical consciousness as the modern West. In order to respond to this perceived lacunae, they were eager to show that India had a historical consciousness comparable to modern West. For,²³ this was the case with Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the great nineteenth century protagonist. Bankim sought to compete with modern West in showing that India had a historical consciousness and he also wanted to use history as a guide to action. He was eager to show this historical tradition had also an important martial tradition, hence in the past Indians did not lack in any way compared to modern Europeans who with their martial power were able to colonize the world. As Vinay Lal argues: “Bankim’s interest in history was derived partly from a desire to

demonstrate that the past of India, and particularly his native Bengal was one of martial traditions".²⁴

But while Bankim wanted to compete with modern West in showing that India had a comparable historical consciousness, Gandhi followed a path of autonomy. For Gandhi, history is not the only guide to action. As Lal helps us understand, "Gandhi knew only too well that his attempt to apply non-violence on a mass scale in India's fight for freedom and thereby to induce the social transformation of Indian society was altogether unprecedented. History could be no guide to action in the present".²⁵ Furthermore, while to Bankim Krishna was a historical figure and Mahabharata a historical text, Gandhi's approaches are different. Thus Gandhi writes in 1924, "The Mahabharata is not to me a historical record. It is hopeless as a history. But it deals with eternal verities in an allegorical fashion".²⁶ "Gandhi would have considered the resort to history as another facet of the attempt of educated Indians, and particularly of the modernizing and urbanized elite which constituted a vanguard, to enter into a race with the West..."²⁷ For Lal, we can look at Gandhi as an "instance of why we should believe that the absence of historical inquiry suggests an acute presence of mind and why this lack, an alleged grave fault, must be revalorized and turned to advantage".²⁸

Insider's Challenge to the Idea of History:

Towards a Critique of the Privileging of Time in Modernity

G.C. Pande, Ashis Nandy and Vinay Lal make a critique of history from outside the empire as it were. Now, we can turn our attention to some fundamental critics of history from within modern west. Human geographer David Harvey noted for his works, *Social Justice and the City, Urbanization of Capital, Consciousness and the Urban Experience* is one such. Harvey laments that in modernity "there has been a strong and almost overwhelming predisposition to give time and history priority over space and geography".²⁹ Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Marshall--all of them have this in common. Marx had also privileged time and while describing the conquest of space through time that takes place under capitalism he seems to have endorsed this particular annihilation of space through time. Marx had no particular remorse for the less advanced spaces of production and consumption being swallowed up by more advanced forces of production, for instance, the peasant by the industrial.

However, for Harvey, "Marx had given primacy to historical time in part as a reaction to Hegel's spatialized conception of the ethical state as the end-product of teleological history".³⁰

Romila Thapar makes a perceptive point about history: "Our readings both of time and history have mutations, but the metaphor remains".³¹ But now while thinking of history, we have to think not only with the metaphor of time but also with space. This shift of metaphor has been made possible by new intellectual movements, which urge us to understand the significance of space in the dynamics of history and society. Foucault³² makes this clear in his article, "Of Other Spaces".

The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis and cycle.... The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment... when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein.³³

But in the trajectory of modernity there has been a move from temporalization of space to spatialization of time. While in the former space was conquered by teleological time, a time on the march to triumph, in spatialization of time, spaces resist being run over by the time of capitalist and scientistic modernity. We can look at various anti-colonial, anti-imperialist movements, and now ethnic movements as instances of spatialization of time where teleological time has stood still and have given way to the logic of spaces and places.

But spatialization of time does not mean only the space-time configuration of becoming. It also means the further speeding up of the process of capitalist appropriation. Social theorist Teresa Brennan who builds upon Lacan in her work *History After Lacan* provides us such an understanding. For Brennan: "Space will take the place of time by the denomination common to both: namely, speed. For to the extent that capital's continued profit must be based more and more on the speed of acquisition, it must centralize control and accumulation more, command more distance and in this respect space *must* take the place of generational time".³⁴

Rethinking History and the Challenge of Coping with Contingencies

The shift from time to space and a realization of a tension between them [which is best reflected in the following lines of David Harvey: "The opposition between Being and Becoming has become central to modernizing history. That opposition has to have to be seen in political terms as the tension between the sense of time and the focus of space"³⁵] prepares an appropriate ground for appreciating the significance of contingency in historical thinking. Both Jurgen Habermas and Michel Foucault help us in this rethinking of history from the vantage point of appreciation of the role of contingency in self and society. In his essay, "Coping with Contingencies: The Return of Historicism," Habermas tells us: "Until the eighteenth century, history had served as a repository for exemplary stories which supposedly can tell us something about the recurring features of human affairs..."³⁶: But with the rise of historical consciousness "the focus of attention shifts from the exemplary to the individual ... this historical consciousness gave birth to an evermore intense awareness of evermore widely spreading contingencies".³⁷ For Habermas while "since Aristotle history had always been conceived as the paradigmatic sphere of the contingent" some philosophers in modernity such as Hegel have felt threatened by "the spreading of historical contingencies".³⁸

To be aware of contingency, for Habermas, is to realize that history is not only a story of progress but also a story of shattered expectations and failure of traditions. In a provocative essay, "Can we learn from history?" Habermas writes: "In unobtrusive ways, we are constantly learning from major traditions, but the question is whether we can learn from events that reflect the failure of traditions".³⁹ What Habermas writes deserves careful attention from us:

History may at best be a critical teacher who tells us how we ought *not* to do things. Of course, it can advise in this way only if we admit to ourselves that we have failed. In order to learn from history, we must not allow ourselves to push unsolved problems aside or repress them; we must remain open to critical experiences—otherwise we will not even perceive historical events as counter-evidence, *as proof of shattered expectations*.⁴⁰

Foucault in recent times has also been a major voice in drawing our attention to the challenge of contingencies in the study of society and history. Foucault questions Kant's construction of a harmonious fit between the three domains of knowledge—scientific, political and religious. Foucault criticizes the view (attributed to Kant) that it is possible to constitute a universal rational body of knowledge. He posits contingency in the dynamics and work of these three bodies of knowledge. Each body of knowledge emerges in specific domains and in specific historical contexts. Each therefore must be seen as contingent. Foucault endorses the distinction between three bodies of knowledge—scientific, political, and religious / ideological; or hope, politics and critical understanding—as made by Kant but urges us to perceive each of these as distinctive, as historically contingent. Each body of knowledge arises from a historically situated pursuit of answering one of the three specific questions—what can I know, what should I will, and what may I reasonably hope for. Considering the central preoccupation with history as an enterprise of knowledge in the present-day discourse, Foucault's critique of a unifying body of rational knowledge lays the foundations of an alternative historiography that provided by Sen.

In his essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy and History," Foucault⁴¹ tells us that a genealogical approach "will never confuse itself with a quest for the 'origins'... on the contrary, it will cultivate the details and accidents that accompany every beginning."

Foucault draws our attention to the work of emergence: "As it is wrong to search for descent in an unprecedented continuity, we should avoid thinking of emergence as the final term of an historical development."⁴²

There is a relationship between awareness of contingency and openness to the dynamics of emergence in the work of self, society and history. Contingency tells us of the limits of apriori laws, formulations and determinations and look at hegemony with suspicion. Since there is no messianic solution to the problems of History by either the State or the Prophet of God, contingency calls for development of responsibility on our part. Therefore it is no wonder that in a recent critical work on historiography, *An Ethics of Remembrance: History, Heterology, and the Nameless Others*, Edith Wyschogrod, brings responsibility to the

heart of history. For her, the historian has a responsibility to describe the life of those who were silenced in the past. But she makes clear: "In speaking for dead others, the historian enters into a temporal zone that is neither past, present nor future".⁴³

In his work, *Plausible Worlds: Probability and Understanding in History and Social Sciences*, Cambridge sociologist and historian Geoffrey Hawthorn also provides us a contingent view of history.⁴⁴ All these reflections are illumined by social theorist's Nancy W. Hanrahan's recent pioneering work on contingency. For Hanrahan, "social processes are commonly understood to be contingent, in the sense that they are neither overdetermined nor completely random. Although they both occur within and structure given social circumstances, no social processes may either conform to or defy historically grounded expectations. As a corollary, the outcomes of social processes are always contingent in that things could turn out otherwise".⁴⁵

Prelude to a Creative Historiographical Engagement: Reconstruction of Time and Nurturance of Spaces of Reconciliation and Hope

The task before historiography now is to go beyond the one-sided privileging of time in modernity and of space in postmodernity. In such an overcoming of one-sided privileging of either space or time, Heidegger provides us with some helpful resources. Heidegger makes a distinction between clock time and lived time where lived time is the time of authentic human experience. This lived time requires an appropriate place, in fact the place of dwelling in place of that of building. For Heidegger, "Dwelling is the capacity to achieve a spiritual unity between humans and things".⁴⁶ While building provides shelter, dwelling provides home and in the world of increasing hopelessness there is an urgent need to "recover a viable homeland in which meaningful roots can be established. Place construction should be about the recovery of roots, the recovery of art of dwelling".⁴⁷

But it is a tragic fact that in his recovery of art of dwelling, Heidegger failed to free himself from the temptations of the Nazi aestheticization of space. But this should not prevent us from building on the other Heidegger whom even the Marxist geographer David Harvey finds inspiring. Writes David Harvey in his recent *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*: "Marx regards experience within the fetishism

as authentic enough but superficial and misleading, while Heidegger views that same world of commodity exchange and technological rationality is at the root of an inauthenticity in daily life which has to be repudiated. This common definition of the root of the problem (though specified as peculiarly capitalist by Marx and modernist, i.e., both capitalist and socialist—by Heidegger) provides a common base from which to reconstruct a better understanding of place”.⁴⁸

In recent times, there are some further helpful reconsiderations of space. For example, Deleuze and Guattari “employ a space that appears divorced from the positivity of identity. Rather than earth, ground and fixity in a location grid, this space evokes air, smoothness and openness”.⁴⁹ In this context, Gibson-Graham speaks of pregnant space, which is a space of exploration, creativity and possibility rather than just a space of overdetermination. Along with pregnant space, we have to now invoke pregnant time. Both pregnant spaces and pregnant times are spaces of reconciliation, overcoming the binding of the past and making a creative leap into the future. In the global community 1944-1947 was one such space and time when old rivalries were forgotten and many radical steps into future were taken such as the declaration of universal human rights.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa is a recent example of a creative confrontation with the past and creation of future. This commission calls for *ubuntu* “which means a generosity of spirit”.⁵⁰ As Michael Lapsley presents the voices of participants in such reconciliation process: “While opting for truth and not for revenge, for *ubuntu* and not for victimization, what we are seeking to do is to break the chain of history, the chain that in so many countries means that the oppressed in one generation becomes the oppressors in the next. It is true whether you talk about Africans in South Africa who survived the concentration camps invented by the British in the beginning of the century or relationship between Jewish people and Palestinians in Israel.”

Edward Said provides us also a similar creative challenge of reconciliation. For Said, “Israelis and Palestinians are now so intertwined through history, geography and political activity that it seems to be absolutely folly to try and plan the *future* of one without that of the other.”⁵¹ But the creation of this common future depends on identifying with the suffering of each other. But for Said, “Most Palestinians are

indifferent to and often angered by stories of Jewish suffering. Conversely most Israelis refuse to concede that Israel is built on the ruins of Palestinian society. Yet there can be no possible reconciliation, no possible solution unless these two communities confront each other's experience in the light of the other. There can be no hope of peace unless the stronger community, the Israeli Jews, acknowledge the most powerful memory for Palestinians, namely the dispossession of an entire people. As the weaker party Palestinians must also face the fact that Israeli Jews see themselves as survivors of the Holocaust, even though that tragedy cannot be allowed to justify Palestinian dispossession".⁵²

Thus the crucial task before us in order to overcome the binding of the past is to be ready to undertake suffering for the sake of our shared destiny. Here we can get help from both Gandhi and Levinas. For Levinas, the ego must be prepared to "undergo the suffering that comes to [them] from non-ego".⁵³ But Kant, Habermas and Amartya Sen are silent on the need of undertaking suffering in order to overcome the bindings of the past and their approaches to history can be redeemed by a Gandhian and Levinasian emphasis on undertaking suffering for the sake of others.

Historiography and the Calling of Creative Transformations

Thus when we speak of history we should not be confined only to the metaphor of time but must be open to space. History as an enterprise of knowledge is neither unitary nor rational activity alone. It is helpful for us to have a relational and differentiated view of historiography as concerned with power, reason and spiritual vision. The problem with current historiography is that it privileges one, mostly power and reason, to the exclusion of the other. But as Sunder Rajan tells us: "The different historical styles contest each other but at the same time, they also illumine each other revealing unsuspected dimensions of each other".⁵⁴ "Since each of these schemes can reveal a truth about the other which they themselves cannot achieve by themselves, their interaction is not merely a situation of conflict and contestation but also necessary for our own awareness".⁵⁵ Furthermore, "...within a given historiographical scheme itself, we must find a place for the political, the philosophical and the ethico-religious frames of understanding".⁵⁶

Sunder Rajan tells us that historiography has to take part in the threefold transformation that is sweeping the world now—the linguistic,

the feminist and the ecological. To this I would like to add another set of triple transformation that calls for our creative response. This is outlined by Portuguese social theorist Santos. For Santos, we are now confronted with a triple transformation where power becomes shared authority", despotic law becomes democratic law", and "knowledge as regulation becomes knowledge as emancipation".⁵⁷ But for the realisation of this triple transformation there is the need for realisation of a new subjectivity: the task is to invent a "subjectivity constituted by the topos of a prudent knowledge of a decent life".⁵⁸ The "emergent subjectivity" of history lives in the frontier and to "live in the frontier is to live in abeyance, in an empty space, in a time between times".⁵⁹ Living in an empty space and empty time calls for realizing the dialectic between time and eternity, tradition and modernity and here openness to emptiness as an integral dimension of space, time, being and society in Indian socio-spiritual traditions can help us in deconstructing modernist formulations of space and time and laying the grounds of an alternative historiography.

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Theorising History in the Context of Social Movements

Sanal Mohan

The struggle for the past is challenging the reigning paradigms of history, and the art of historiography, in today's world. In this process, whether in its form of sure-grounded knowledge of the past, or in its new appearance in fragments outside the archive, history plays a pivotal role, assisting at the emerging alternative readings of the past, identity and power relations, from the margins. In this insightful contribution, grounded on intense field research, Dr. Sanal Mohan of the School of Social Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, is engaging us with this contemporary historical problematique. He draws upon the experience of Pratyaksa Daivarakhana Sabha, a dalit movement of South Kerala. In its search for identity, in the wake of modernity in Travancore, the community becomes aware of its 'lacks', the foremost of which is the lack of history itself. This consciousness sets them on a process of discovering an identity/history for themselves, through the re-memory of their suffering, giving rise to a historical imagination, wherein the borders between history and story collapse.

The contemporary challenges to the reigning paradigms of history form the major concern of this paper. This is contextualised in the genre of writings that try to conceptualise the problem of identity and consciousness, along with changing perception of the past.¹ In this process, history plays a pivotal role, whether it is in the form of its universal notions as embodiment of 'true' knowledge of the past or the contemporary problem of losing its ground to fragments, giving rise to fundamentally different reading of the power relations from the margins. In order to reflect on a possible engagement with this historiographical problem, I draw up on the experience of certain dalit movements in

Kerala that showed an extreme concern with history. Here, I am foregrounding a slice of historical imagination that was emphatically theorised by one of the influential dalit thinkers of 20th century Kerala, Poikayil Yohannan (later Kumara Guru Devan 1879-1939) founder of Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha (the Sabha here after) who achieved divine status posthumously.² In the context of the dalit search for modernity under colonialism, he stumbled against the lack of history for dalits that according to him was the root cause of their fall and enslavement. In one of his early verses he sang: I behold the histories of many races. Every history in Keralam was search for the history of my people, But there was none on the earth to write story of my race.³

Here, we may identify a deep-rooted desire for identification with a historical 'lack', which is projected as history. It is significant in this context to observe that, this desire for history of one's own race, in this instance, the history of slave castes, happens at a time when histories of regional, national and social identities were already written. We may refer here to the efforts at writing State Manuals and histories of Travancore by administrators and historians preceding this theorisation by Yohannan.⁴

Can we, at this juncture think of what the theories stand for? It seems that, the history referred to here actually suffers from a double exigency. On the one hand, it tries to foreground the experience of lower castes that have been totally erased even from historical memory and on the other, to project the necessity of writing a possible history that privileges the written word. This can augur well for a radical agenda considering the over all social context in which such challenge was put forward. This particular desire to write a history of 'people without history' lingers on the fact that, it is a claim that enables people to step into history, which is extremely significant. But it will be equally significant to ask how the very project of writing such a history will proceed? It may be suggested that, the radical intent of such a project could introduce certain notions of the past, in so far as they were necessary to engage with the present. As a result of this, the stepping into history becomes stepping not into the past, but into the present where the contest of modernity was taking place. The second aspect of the engagement with history was that, in their search for history dalits had to selectively use the past, valorising certain moments of the past,

that were on the borderlines of history and fiction. And moreover, whenever they attempt to write history, they get caught in the dominant paradigm of history that ultimately privileges the national histories. This is a point to which we shall return later.

On the Borderlines of History and Fiction?

Theorising Slavery

Here we may take up certain specific examples that show how history was understood as a 'lack'. This notion of history, interpreted in relation to a 'lack' becomes the major argument of the theorisation of slavery. The slave experience was considered as the central and deciding factor for the dalit communities' that lived through agrestic slavery in Kerala. Our problem here is to encounter how in the context of social movements in modernity, the slave experience was recalled, and made at par with authentic histories, that contest the textual representation of slavery familiar to us, as academic histories. This is achieved by fictionalising the history of slave experience or by erasing the difference between fiction and history. This is reflected in the discourses of the Sabha, as well as in the prayers chanted on almost all occasions of life. By such repetitions, and ritual rendering of the slave experience, it enters the consciousness of the people, making them aware of the horrors of slavery that existed historically. The second and a corollary act to this had been the writing on slavery, sometimes making use of and quoting from historical documents that refer to slave transactions. It also helped in normalising this particular discourse on slavery.⁵

In contemporary discourses of race, ethnicity, and colonialism there is renewed interest to theorise slavery in the colonial era. We are not referring here particularly to the forms of slavery that existed in the Ancient World that have been theorised in the context of modes of production and transition debates. At the same time it is acknowledged there that, forms of slavery, that developed as part of colonialism were theorised drawing up on discussions on capitalist mode of production. Most of the empirical materials that I drew up on are from colonial Kerala and this might provide certain insights for comparison with other historical contexts. One of the major differences with the agrestic slavery that was in vogue in Kerala and that of the New World slavery could have been that the slave trade of Kerala was not of a comparable magnitude. But they were transacted within Kerala, with complete

disregard for the self and family of the slaves.⁶ They were bought and sold like cattle along with land. It is quite possible to argue that even before the emergence of a proper land maker, slave transaction prevailed in Kerala. We are yet to have a history of such a relations of production that was much more than relations of production. As human experience, it is deep rooted, being part of multiple effects of caste hierarchy that the lower castes experienced. Marxist historiography in Kerala could not deal with this aspect of history even after researches on agrarian social forms. This absence of a history therefore becomes the starting point of our reflection on slave experiences as rendered in the discourses of the Sabha that we are analysing. It is observed here that through its teachings the Sabha was / is engaged in a continuous process of constructing the images of the past, which is not in the mould of a linear narrative. This is because of the fact that we observe a lot of ruptures in their theorisation. At the same time it is pertinent to observe the fact that at one remove certain textual images of past have also gone well into the making of such histories. Besides these histories, it is possible to identify 'the baggage of imagined histories' that has become part of the history that they recount. It is through this process of selective appropriation / erasure and reinscription that particular versions of the past have been created and circulated. This has gone too much into the making of an identity for the people who have not experienced slavery in their lived experience.

In the experience of the Sabha that we have been analysing, 'slave experience' as a theme, has been a recurrent feature reminding people always of their origins. These are definitely memories of slavery experienced, but curiously not by the generation that recalls it. It is significant to note that there is a tension involved in the memories of individuals, where the personal life history does not validate slave experience, while the collective memory that pertains to the historical past recreates images of slavery. In other words, the situatedness of individuals in contemporary cultural milieu, which is far removed from slavery as a social experience challenges the historians to analyse how these visual images of slavery are created through some kind of 'ritual rememory'.⁷ The concept of rememory⁸ is used in other contexts to analyse slave experience'.⁹ "rememory... is something which possesses (or haunts) one, rather than something which one possesses.¹⁰ It is absolutely necessary to ask what happens to history in this context. As

I have argued, 'history' is imaginatively recreated, through various strategies. It has been observed in other contexts that, if individuals and collectivities have been produced in discourses, it is possible to imagine discourses that will produce 'new selves'.¹¹ The experience that I am recounting here produces new selves by providing a different version of their history, in which slavery assumes centrality.

What is the metamorphosis that such a history is passing through? It is beyond an iota of doubt that conventional histories do not speak of emotional and somatic "feelings" as the "psycho-social history of (slavery's) impact".¹² The theorising of slavery makes the history thus handed down appear as "history of the present" in which the effects of slavery's brutality... are acknowledged spatially and experientially through 'rememory'.¹³

In such situation, 'history', as it is retold by the community undergoes a process of 'fictioning'. In other words it is through the imaginative reproduction of the past, that it takes place. This might provide necessary condition for a 'critical revisiting' of history. This act of revisioning is characterised by collectivity rather than absolute consensus. This collectivity 'reconstitute[s] the past, through personal/social 'narrative or story telling'.¹⁴

In another context, reflecting on historiography, in *History: Science and Fiction*, Michael de Certeau has observed the significance of fiction '[F]iction in any of its modalities – mythic, literary, scientific or metaphorical – is a discourse that "informs" the "real" without pretending either to represent it or to credit itself with the capacity for such a representation'.¹⁵ Following this argument we would like to consider the effects of slavery narratives that the Sabha circulates, as well as the rituals and objects that pertained to slavery that they venerate. For example, the veneration of the 'column of slaves' in the vicinity of the headquarters of the Sabha reminds the followers of the dead forefathers/ mothers who died due to the harsh practice of slavery. It definitely stands for a discourse that "informs" the "real" without pretending to represent it. Similarly the procession held out to commemorate the annual day of abolition of slavery is also significant from this particular point of view. It drives home the point that, it is yet another day in their sacred calendar that is to be observed. It may be observed here that

there were not much significant changes in the lives of the slaves, even after the formal abolition of slavery in 1855.

Historicising 'Lacks'

Following contemporary social theory, the notion of 'lack' is understood here as incompleteness of the structure, which is a result of structural dislocation. It refers not to a subject's lack of particular object, but to the failure of the structure to constitute a fully structured objectivity.¹⁶ It is a substantial theoretical question whether we can understand the 'lack' to which the Sabha refers to, following this line of argument. At a primary level it might appear that, the 'lack' referred to in the discourses of the Sabha points to the subject's lack of particular objects. But the moment we consider the structural determinants of slavery in the pre-colonial and colonial times, we might gain more insights. The notion of 'lack' is used here to deal more specifically with the problem and the sites where the lack is experienced. As social agents, who were in the threshold of social change, a fundamental 'lack' was identified in terms of history. It is to be interpreted as a problem pertaining to the very process of constructing knowledge of the past. If writing of history is understood as a violent and stifling process with its own detailed procedures that inscribes one version of the past, it becomes equally compelling to think of other alternative histories that were erased in the process. Once it has been suggested, it becomes part of the project of the Sabha to retrieve the history of dalits, who have been denied of history. This engagement with history led them to problematise the history of Adi-Dravidas, whom they categorically referred to as indigenous people.¹⁷ This history further unfolds in the gradual coming of Aryans and subsequent destruction of the first Dravidian civilization – Indus valley Civilization – leading to its eventual decline. Adi-Dravidas were enslaved, as they were exposed to the machinations of Aryans. In this, Adi-dravida women had a role to play as they were lured by the Aryans and thus fell from their high pedestal, which was kept intact till then, because of their vow to be truthful to their men by keeping intact their chastity. But the fall was to have eternal consequences that led to the eventual loss of their heritage and they became slaves of the Aryans. Enslavement of Adi-Dravidas has been explained in terms of the fall of their 'mothers'. Thus the 'sin' entered the face of the earth through the fall of women. The entire history is

later on woven around the practice of slavery. In this mould of narrativising history, what comes to prominence is a particular paradigm within which the entire history of the Adi-Dravidas was conceptualised. They imagined a period when Adi-Dravidas were rulers of this land, when they had kings and kingdom, wealth, power and knowledge. Similarly, they had established priests and priesthood to take care of the spiritual domain until their fall that obliterated forever the priestly class and their spiritual life. In these narratives, in fact, prominent position is given to spirituality and religious practices that were no less in importance when considered in the context of lower caste movements' engagement with the spiritual realm. It is interesting to observe that along with the struggle for material resources, the problems of the spiritual realms were also taken up. These aspects of social life were actually the 'lack' to which, the complex discourses of the Sabha addresses itself to. These 'lacks' are to be located within the structural problems of society rather than anywhere else. To the contemporary historiography it provides one major problem for theorisation. It may be observed here that, the later process of identification that tries to transgress the 'lack' is to be precisely situated in the structural domain than at the level of individual and collective experience. At the same time the lack at the individual and collective level can be sought in the verses that were sung representing the tragic plight of the slave children, orphaned as their parents were sold off to different landlords.

Father is no more ... thinthara

Mother is no more ... thinthara

We have no one anymore ... thinthara

This particular verse reminds us of the loss of the basic structure of social life - family - and the emotional security that it offers. This is a song which is repeated endless times as part of the ritual rememory of slavery and the subsequent orphaning of slave children. It is, in other words, a story that recalls and situates the experience of social alienation and rejection that had resulted from the practice of slavery. This is an experience, which is in contradiction with the immediate reality of the people, who sing these songs now. But at the same time the discursive power of such themes, which are repeated umpteen times, resolves the contradiction between the binary of true/false distinctions and reality is constructed through such continuous singing. It becomes imperative

here to consider the nature of the 'lack' that is to be overcome. Here it may be observed that, we are referring to a historical 'lack', which is rooted in the contradictions of the social structure. This further leads to the imagining of a history of oppression that also springs from the fund of historical consciousness, which is a derivative of this general milieu. Now, let us interrogate the notion of the history of oppressions that are represented variously. In the teachings of the Sabha, they emphasise the harsh treatment meted out to the "slaves". In several verses, it is graphically and emotionally described how the slaves were yoked along with oxen and buffaloes and made to plough the fields. The intensity of the pain and fatigue are made out through the detailed narratives. The horrors of the slave labour are further made out explicitly, in such stories as how, slaves were killed and their blood spilt to propitiate the spirits that would otherwise cast spells that will eventually damage the bunds of rice fields, (particularly so in the case of rice fields that were reclaimed from backwaters). The narratives of every day lives of slaves tell nothing but a history of oppression and the notion of suffering body, which is unclean, that requires to be salvaged. More intense stories are being made out that underpin the ravages caused by the cruelties of slavery. Landlords forced women to work in the fields even before they completed postnatal care, forcing them to work for hours together transplanting and weeding paddy fields for longer hours without respite, even in torrential rain or scorching sun. They were not even permitted to feed their new borns who were usually kept in the cradle hanging from the branches of the near by trees. In one such instance, when the mother came back after hours of work, what awaited her was the ant-eaten mortal remains of her tender one. The staggering problem here is to analyse the real functions of the histories of oppression that are recalled on such 'religious' occasions? It is equally significant to ask, to what extent it is history and non-history. It is history even to a conventional historiographer as they are well documented and repeated in several histories of Kerala. But in our context, it does perform an extra function, in that it helps achieve subjectivity and agency for people who recall this collective memory. In fact, such rationalised critical theorisation definitely helps transgress the 'social lacks' to which we are referring. Another extremely important dimension of the whole process is the fuzzy boundary of secular/ non-secular history. An everyday discourse in which history is transformed in to a metaphor makes possible this

valorisation of history. Such histories and historical thinking will be far from being historical explanation or historical practice that vouchsafe for objectivity of the knowledge this produces. It may be considered as an attempt to analyse the contemporary structures of domination. Notions like, Adi-Dravida, and discourses of slave experience rather than providing well-grounded historical analysis, introduce a fragment of historical experience. Such an insight might help a historian in his inquiries but at the same time its ultimate aim is not historical enquiry. On the contrary, it aims at stepping into history by continuously negotiating with the structures of domination. It is in this sense, that it becomes history of the present.

Historical texts that have been formulated in such contexts are used to impart the significant religious teachings to the followers of the Sabha. For example, at the time of the *Rakshanirnayam* (determination of salvation), young people are initiated into the Sabha by dramatically recounting the stories of slave experience. This is contextualised by providing histories of other religions – Hinduism, Islam and Christianity – in which dalits were always a subjugated people. Now, the founder of the Sabha has achieved divine status, which could redeem his people from eternal damnation. He is the one who is born to fulfil the mission of salvaging descendants of slaves from the thralldom of slavery. This representation of history as an unfinished journey, from the horrors of slavery to the bliss of freedom becomes essential element that constitutes the identity of the community. It happens due to the tremendous transformation of their worldviews by completely uprooting their social selves.

Making of Community through History

It has been argued by many contemporary social theorists that the process of identification and the emergence of community could be rooted definitely in certain forms of social practices. In the example of the Sabha, its emergence as a community, even if it is fragile, takes place at the level of practice in which history and the peculiar way it is rendered assumes significance. It will sound strange to hear that history and its rendition becomes part of a practice. Here the significant aspect is that, because of the particular way of theorising history the Sabha identifies certain historical moments as ritually significant, though such things could well remain important to other genres of historiography

also. For example, on certain ritually significant occasions their 'religious men' appear in the dress of traditional agricultural labourer. They are clad in *Kacha thorth* (small cloth worn around the waist) and *thoppippala* (cap made of tender folder of areca palm). This mode of dressing then happens to be an icon that evokes memories of the slave agricultural labourer that brings along with it, histories of oppression and sufferings.

It is extremely significant to situate this notion of history as the bedrock of practice that makes the community possible. At the same time, we may observe here different realms to social spaces created in the course of the existence of the Sabha. But the question remains as to how the social space itself is constituted.¹⁸ While it is at the interactive level that we identify the construction of social space, once constituted, it can generate its own new spaces. It may be appropriate here to observe that with the growth of new institutional space, the already existing discourse of history became entrenched. Such fledgling institutions (school, weaving centres, and congregation for prayers) were suddenly equated with the state and its functions, for which the legitimacy was sought in history. As there developed contests over resources with the state and dominant castes and groups there gradually evolved a seeping in of the vocabulary otherwise used by the state. This became quite clear, when the Sabha had to negotiate with development and social change. Similarly, the ritual rendering of history, posits the nation in certain forms existing in the past, without social contradictions. But when it comes to the retrieval of the past, as past and history, it is not the non stratified society of the Adi-Dravida past that is recalled, but a history in which Kings, Queens and Courtiers loomed large.

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- 1 Cfr H.L. Seneviratne, *Identity Consciousness and the Past: Forging of Caste and Community in India and Sri Lanka* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).
 - 2 Poikayil Yohannan (later Kumara Guru Devan) started his Sabha (Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha) in 1909 at Eraviperoor near Tiruvalla, in Central Travancore. It originally developed as a movement within missionary churches but suddenly moved out of it, but remained a powerful movement that drew in masses from Pulaya, Paraya and Kurava communities (mostly Christian). But after his death in 1939, there was a reversal in their belief and the Sabha joined the Hindu Reformist trend, but remained mostly in a fuzzy world as far as their identity was concerned. Soon the founder of the Sabha became Kumara Gurudevan, after the Hindu Reformist practices. See for details Stephen Fuchs, *Rebellious Prophets* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1965). See also Sanal Mohan, "Religion, Social Space and Identity: Construction of Boundary in Colonial Kerala", paper submitted in the *Conference of Subaltern Historians* (Lucknow: Giri Institute of Development Studies, 1998), and "Dalit Discourses and the Evolving New Self: Contests and Strategies", *Review of Development and Change*, 1999/4(1).
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- 6 Cfr K.K. Kusuman, *Slavery in Travancore* (Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1973).
- 7 I am thankful to Prof. M. Yesudasan, C.M.S. College, Kottayam for working out this notion.
- 8 I am thankful to Prof. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak for suggesting the concept of rememoration in analysing the problem.
- 9 Cfr Carl Plasa and Betty J. Ring (eds), *The Discourses of Slavery: Aphra Ben to Tony Morrison* (London: Routledge, 1994).
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Ethnographic Construction of Historiography

A Case Study of Dalits in Kancheepuram District¹

Joe Arun

Traditional anthropology understood itself as having little to do with history, engaged as it was in the study of peoples and their cultures insulated from the flux of time. Contemporary orientations in that discipline stress the importance of ethnographic construction of history. That is precisely what Joe Arun, a research scholar of anthropology at the University of Oxford, U.K., attempts to do in this article on the basis of his field-study conducted among a group of dalits in the district of Kancheepuram, Tamilnadu. The presentation deploys social constructionism to let the voice of the silenced resound and their narratives heard in the context of a conflict over land. The result is the affirmation of the agency of the subaltern people in an alternative historical reconstruction of their past, which presents a challenge to the dominant model of historiography and an incisive critique of the power intertwined with it.

Introduction

This paper has two aims. One is to critically look at historiographies in general and historiographies on Dalits in particular by employing the concept of social constructionism. Second, is to propose ethnographic perspective of writing social history as an alternative to conventional historiographies by presenting a case study of Dalits of Papanallur village in Kancheepuram district, Tamil Nadu, in which I intend to show how they narrate or construct their history by ingenious selection of facts from two conflicts, one in 1942 and another in 1985 with non-Dalits of

the village. The gist of the perspective of the paper could be explained in the following way. Ethnographic construction of history has its embeddedness in participant-observation. Staying for a long duration with a people and recording of people's narratives of their past, requires problematicisation of spatial, temporal and of native's voice or perspective in addition to dialogic appropriation of ideologies, bifocality and juxtaposition of possibilities of meanings both from the observer and the observed². In other words, I suggest an ethnographic construction of history tempered by postmodern critique as one of the effective historiographies.

The paper begins with brief theoretical exposition on social constructionism, as to provide a grammar on which the whole study rests. Then it moves over to a critique of conventional historiographies arguing that they, largely, disguised, or failed to acknowledge native's voice³ in the process of production of historiographies. As an alternative, it suggests an ethnographic approach to study and writing of history. Finally, applying this approach, an attempt is made to explain how the Dalits of Papanallur in Kancheepuram district, Tamil Nadu, narrate their history in and through a conflict over land with non-Dalits, treating land as a symbol. To conclude, history making (historiography) should be based primarily on what the subalterns make sense of their actions and how they do it. To complement and embellish the natives' voice theoretical production of history must be used. To that extent it becomes not only 'history from below' but also '*history of the below*'.

01.Social Constructionism and historiographies:

Kenneth Gergen defines social constructionism as the explication of the 'processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live' (1985:266). Social constructionism here in this definition is viewed as a way in which a person's understanding and interpretation of an activity constitutes the activity itself. The perception of the whole activity is done by the practitioner him/herself first, being the subject and object of history in the same breath treating the people as having self-knowledge for construction of their own history. This constitutive subject-agent has been identified as underlying strategy in *Subaltern Studies* project⁴. Anthropologist who formally constructs the activities as historical facts or narrative of facts serves as only secondary role in history making.

There are two steps in the social constructionism: *procedural* and *reflexive*. The former places emphasis on what and how something is interpreted, and the latter pays attention to who constructs and to what ends. Through these steps, we could gauge how people make sense of their own activities of past and what limits there are in the constructor's (anthropologist's) claims. In addition, in such social constructionism the material that forms a locus for production of history is social events and daily practices.

To enlighten on this point, I draw on Foucault's (1991) approach to constructionism. He makes it amply clear that what we need to look at when we construct or reconstruct reality of the past in relation to the present are, not institutions, theories or ideology, "but *practices* –with the aim of grasping the conditions which make these acceptable at a given moment; the hypothesis being that these types of practice are not just governed by institutions, prescribed by ideologies, guided by pragmatic circumstances... it is a question of analysing a 'regime of practices' - practices being understood here as places where what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken for granted meet and interconnect" (1991: 75)⁵. In simple words, Foucault rejects any claim that there is something 'real' in people or in things; instead, it is all in the ways we talk about them: discursive formulations. They are fundamental to our grasp of the essence of things and events. I deploy this as a crucial factor in the constructionist project of history. It helps delve into shared practices in order to construct social facts that would explain both the reality of the past and the present. Because the dimension of 'regime of practices' that Foucault invites us to analyse is one that explains what are the latent content in 'programmatic attempts to organise institutional spaces, their administrative routines and rituals and the conduct of human actors in specified ways' (M. Dean: 1998: 185). To do this, I think the written records, archival materials and travel accounts alone are not sufficient. In addition to them, we need to observe people for a sufficient length of time, and we have to participate as well in their daily practices if we intend to really write about them. It is the fieldwork tradition of anthropology in which the observed is treated as loci of narratives not the observer. So, every event in the production of history must be based both on people's perception of their actions (social constructionism), and intentions and means of the constructor (reflexivity), who analyses

daily practices of the people. Foucault calls it as '*eventalisation*' that will, he thinks, explain the history of the events, practices, discourses of the past and diagnose where we exactly stand at present⁶. In brief, people are not the *objects* of history, but the *subjects* of their history and history making. I shall return to this later when I take up the case study where I apply the principles of ethnographic historiography. Before doing that, we need to look at different types of historiographies in order to highlight the relevance of ethnographic historiography.

02. A critique of Historiographies:

The historiographical tropes- pre-colonial, colonial, and nationalist- that have been around before *Subaltern studies*, have been widely accepted by historians here and elsewhere, as the resource for 'constructing, mobilising and consolidating social identity' (Daud Ali: 1999: 11) and for agendas for power, and thus elitist in their approach (Ranajit Guha: 2000: 1). From Edward Said's *Orientalism*, which made an assault upon production of histories as conceived from vantage point of Europe, colonial historiography has been viewed as a principal instrument 'for inculcating the stereotypical dichotomy between the backward, immobile Orient as contrasted with the dynamic, Christian and/or scientific West' (Sumit Sarkar: 1998: 12). Said evolved a cultural critique that served in the hands of many historians and anthropologists as a paradigm to emphasis non-essentialist, decentred, and heterogeneous approach to study of non-European histories and cultures. Nationalist historiography took the initiative to challenge it and attempted to transform it from 'passive to active' drawing mainly on data from Sanskritic Indic civilisation⁷. Agreeing to essentialisation of India by the colonialists and their periodization of Indian history into the Hindu, Muslim the nationalists contested that India was capable of relating to History and Reason. Since nationalism was vibrant in the 1920s and 1930s, it acquired a status equal to colonial historiographies. The nationalists chose ancient India as a ground to contest colonialists' historiography and more importantly disseminated a discourse that in ancient India, everything was good and in a state of plentitude, only invasion of Muslims changed all that. In addition, the nationalist historiography was unable to get out of orientalist assumptions and techniques of representation of the real. Keeping in line with essentialism it treated India as undivided subject struggling to come out of colonial

backwardness. Therefore, it searched an authentic Indian culture and history making caste as essence of India and evaluating all other aspects from it to construct a modern India.

Even anthropologists (Moffatt 1997, Mosse 1985, Deliege 1997, and Clarke 1999), who, unlike the traditional orientalist, studied people rather than texts and observed culture and society in action failed largely to construct their ethnographies by listening to polyphonic narrative of the past. More sharply, they did not perceive the simmering voice of protest of the Dalits and the view of the high castes who subordinated them, which I call 'the view of the elites'⁸. It may be because of the time when they went into the field the voice of protest was not that audible to force the anthropologists to record in their ethnographies. On the other hand, they might have thought that it was too early to look into such areas when the basics of the social life of the Dalits were hardly known to the world. In this, Clarke's (1999) stands out by the way he presented the history of Paraiyars. He attempts to 'activate and make audible the small voices' (p.61). Yet his presentation remains to become comprehensive by including the voice of the elites of the village he studied that is necessary, it seems to me, to judge the authenticity of any historiography⁹.

In the meantime Ranajit Guha's *Subaltern Studies* project exposed the anomalies of both the historiographies of colonialism and nationalism and presented India as having anti-foundational and multiple trajectories of history in the form of subalternity. Subaltern historiography, originally inspired by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci engaged in uncovering and discovering subaltern agency and subaltern consciousness in order to revise dominant historiographies that only presented contributions of the elite, both in the colonial and nationalist history making¹⁰. It took up to writing 'histories from below' or what the subalternists called 'politics of the people'. The subaltern project began, and it is today, as Marxist, may be a Gramscian inspired one, and post-structuralist (deconstructionist) at the same time. Yet, the subaltern writings were deduction of subaltern consciousness only from the textual and discursive analysis of the elite historiographies, what could be termed as 'literary criticism'. It ignored oral histories (Spivak: 2000: 331) and informal discursive practices. On top of all this the project of subaltern project has, due to various reasons changed its locations divorced largely from its original agenda.

However, what remains as useful focus in it, which I intend to employ in this paper as I go along, is its commitment to restore 'subject' in his/her own right treating subaltern as a conscious human-agent capable of making his/her own history. In addition, the subaltern initiative, following Gramscian line of thought, viewed subaltern history as fragmented and episodic since the subaltern classes themselves are divided (Gramsci: 1971: 52-55). Immediately, it means that the nature of subaltern historiography is multiple and heterogeneous as against unitary and monolithic character of colonial and nationalist historiographies. Taking into consideration of to that extent of the subaltern project, I would like to suggest ethnographic model of history making, which facilitates avenues in which the people about whom history is written occupy the centre as the subjects of their historical narratives, as one of the powerful ways of history making.

03. Ethnographic Construction of History:

Ethnographic tradition I refer here is certainly not the traditional fieldwork approach that treated the peoples outside enlightenment rationalism of Europe as 'others' and to be viewed as 'objects'. Instead, I would like to draw attention to the ethnographic model that accommodated stringent critique of postmodernism and adapted accordingly¹¹. I shall quickly present the characteristics of such ethnographic model, which is employed in my case study. Ethnographic model of history making is based on two crucial factors. They are *observation* and *participation*, which are done through long duration of stay with the people about whom a study is undertaken. Such a study has the following characteristics:

1. It begins from and concentrates on everyday routine life to explicate latent structure of meaning that lay behind the 'ordinariness' of life. Personal confession about life and its meaning is done in an atmosphere where the observed is not self-conscious.
2. Ethnographic model of observation of life of people and writing their histories is fundamentally dialogical between the *observer* and *observed*.
3. It is also reflexive in terms of looking at the observer's intentions and ideological agendas.
4. It is hermeneutical when it studies social systems and the practices in them to help understand what is seen and what is hidden.

5. The writing done followed by participant observation says more by juxtaposing multiple levels and styles of analysis, and studying *all* the aspects of life-religion, politics, kinship, and economics and so on, what George E. Marcus (1998) calls 'imagining the whole' and 'saying more by saying it all'.
6. Realist ethnography places emphasis both on micro and macro narratives. Controlled observation of a single site and findings from the observation is taken to apply in other similar sites.
7. More attention is paid to 'voice' of people than to structure of society. Although the tropes of social structure are important means to understand a society concern is shifted to perspective or voice of the people about whom the study is done.
8. Ethnography consists of both representation of the ethnographer and self-representation by the subalterns, thus historiography has plural authorship¹².

Such ethnographic model I use to construct a history of Papanallur village¹³. I do not claim to make the study exhaustive but rather as an example of such model. The village is situated 5 kilometres from Vedanthangal, 35 kilometres from Chengalpattu, and from Chennai, the state capital, the village is 90 km away. The total household in the village is 180, of which the Dalits, mainly Paraiyars are 80 and the rest are the high castes, Goundars (Vanniyars), Reddiyars and Mudaliyars. All the Dalits are Roman Catholic Christians and the high castes of the village are Hindus. Most of the lands are owned by the high castes: before 1940s Brahmins owned most of the fertile lands and later from 1960s the Reddiyars took control of them. The Vanniyars bought the lands in the 1970s. The Dalits, except three families, own minimum of two acres of land. Barring few houses that are concrete buildings, all others, both in the colony and main village, are all huts thatched either in dried palm leaves or coconut leaves. Few from the high caste groups and from the Dalits go out of the village for non-agricultural works. For instance, about twenty Dalit men go over to places near Chennai to work in coconut groves. At the political level, the leader of Papanallur panchayat is from the Vanniyar community. In it two Dalits are members elected from the sections of the colony. Geographically the Dalit colony is separated from the main village- *Uur*. With this brief note let us take up the narratives about their past in relation to the present. Reserving

my remarks for a while let me first present the historical narratives that deal mainly with conflict between the Dalits and the high castes, which I recorded during my fieldwork¹⁴.

Dalits: “we were landless coolies in this village for a long time although our grandfathers repeatedly had told us that most of the lands belonged to four *vagaiyaras* (lineage) of Paraiyars- *sanaar*, *theradi*, *thoti* and *kambukooti*. We had to work in the fields of Goundars¹⁵, and Reddiyars for mere pittance. Drumming at their funerals and village festivals, cultivating their lands from ploughing until harvesting, and clearing dead cattle were our main works. During monsoon failure, our people, particularly our children, died of hunger since our people were not able to collect food from the high castes. In one of those drought-hit years our *paattans* (grandfathers) of Thoti vagaiyara went to Ramakannappa Goundar and requested him allot at least a small piece of land. Since we worked for his people for many generations, he was generous enough to show us a piece of land in the *meikaal purambokku*¹⁶. Our Paattans worked for a long time to clear the thorny bushes in the land and later cultivated only cereals since the land was not that good for cultivation of paddy. May be this is why they gave us such a type of land. After some years of cultivation the land became very fertile for any type of cultivation. Once, my father told me, that our people had harvested more than hundred bags of paddy. This made the high castes jealous. They were waiting for an opportunity to appropriate the land from us. In 1942¹⁷, during the day of *Pongal* festival they destroyed the paddy field by sending their cattle into the land. When our people came to know about this they ran to the fields, chased the cattle out, and beat the high castes up heavily. Later there had been a big *kalavaram* (riot) between our people and them. Nevertheless, since they were numerically powerful they went to court and the police arrested and took our people, mainly men folk to Achirapakkam jail. Making use of the absence of men in our colony, the high castes entered our area, burnt our houses, and raped our women. Despite many complaints from us the court and the police supported the high castes only. Our people had no support from anywhere. One of our men, David, from Theradi vagaiyara having learnt that Fr. Paul – ‘*paul saamiyar*’ of Maduranthagam would be favourable to people like us went and told the *saamiyar* about our people’s plight. He immediately contacted the government officials and got our people released from the jail. Later on, he helped our people

win the case in the court. Realising that the *saamiyar* would be thereafter our only support, our people were baptised by Fr. Paul in Cheyyur church. From then on, the Goundars started to respect to a certain extent fearing that Fr. Paul was behind us. As years rolled by, Fr. Paul told our people that we were oppressed by the high castes since we were not educated. Therefore, he arranged to found an elementary school to educate our children. Slowly our people bought lands and went out to Madras for works while some of us still worked for the Goundars. Life went on without much problem.

Nevertheless, very recently a similar conflict changed our life totally. In 1995, once again on the day of Pongal festival the Goundars without any information took their cattle for *maadu kalaithal*¹⁸ to the field in front of our school¹⁹. We opposed it although some of our people, mainly our drummers, were in support of the high castes. However, they were adamant about chasing the cattle in the field in front of our school. Therefore, we decided finally to stop this injustice (*aniyayam*) and called for a meeting among us. Meanwhile the whole issue developed into a serious conflict through an incident in which our boys clashed with them and beat the high caste men. In the mean time, another issue came up that sharpened the conflict with them. There was an overhead water tank for the whole village but the high castes refused to collect water from the taps connected to the tank saying that the water comes from *parapayalgal* (Paraiyars). Therefore, they decided to dig up another bore-well, which could be used only for the high castes. With the help of the high castes from nearby villages, they began the work of digging a well in a *Purambokku* (common) land near our school. We complained to the RDO²⁰ and the Tashildar of Maduranthagam who came to the village and asked the high castes to suspend the work until the dispute is settled. Finally, in a peace meeting between the high castes and our representatives in the presence of government officials it was decided that both of us should not use the disputed land and it belongs to the government.

Later, in our colony meeting we decided to stop working once and for all for the high castes. For the past few years, our men have not been drumming at their funeral. We no longer bury their dead, clear the dead cattle, and do the *pannaiyal velai* (bonded labour). We hear they bury or burn their dead and even clear the dead cows. We feel happy and for the first time we realise we live our lives with some dignity

as human persons- 'manushanaaga'. At the same time some of us want to continue the services for the high castes. But we hope they will abide by the decision of colony panchayat".

Meiyappan: (who stopped his pannaiyal works- drumming, burying the dead and so on for the high castes): "I am really happy that now I am not doing the ugly (*asingam*) works. So far when I happened to meet the Goundars I had to remove my sandals and remove towel from my shoulders. Now I don't do. This itself gives me great joy. This is why I told Michael when he came to my house few days ago to persuade me to resume the works for the Goundars, 'allow me to live a life with human dignity (*manitha maanbu*)'. It is true that due to my refusal to work for Goundars I struggle a lot to survive and do not have a paisa to take my wife who is sick for the last three months. I do not have land and nobody is there to support me. Yet, believe me I will never return to my *thoti* work. Thanks to our women's association (*Maathar Sangam*) we have become aware of our human rights and we will fight it till the end".

When I asked the high castes in the village about the narratives of the Dalits they had the following to say:

Non-Dalits²¹: "*for a long time we all of us lived together peacefully. There was no discrimination (verubaadu) between the colony people and us. We have been living as children of one mother. Recently the Saamiyars who came here created all the problem between the colony people and us. Sir, everybody has a role in the functioning of a village. Thoti has a responsibility of drumming, clearing the dead cow and so on. Like that, everybody has a role in a village. The village will flourish and the people in it will lead a peaceful life if everybody in the village does his/her role. We were high castes from the beginning of the world. It is a divine plan. We have not designed it. When they say 'we will not beat drum at funeral' they are committing a sin against God, who has designed a plan for all of us. Our Paatanaars (our grandfathers) have told us that all the paraiyans are meant to work in our fields and my paatan told me once, it was he who brought them from different places to work for us. To be honest, we have never ill-treated them (tharakuraivaaga). The incident of 1941, you refer to, is entirely wrong. In fact they should be grateful to us for allotting lands for them. Even my father donated 4 acres of land to the people of theradi*

vagaiyara. It was actually a plan of Maduranthagam pathiriyaar (Reverend Father of Maduranthagam) to convert them to Christianity by giving them wheat and flour (maavu). These paraiyans will do anything for oru satty kool (one pot of porridge). Therefore, when they saw wheat they went with Christianity. Even today, government is doing the same thing the English Pathriyaars did before by unduly partial to the SCs. The state government does not pay attention to our problems. Among us, there are very poor families worse than some families in the colony. Listen, we are not going to be simply spectators to the whole thing. Very soon, we are going to organise our caste men against all others. As you are aware, very recently they have stopped doing the traditional works they have been doing for us for centuries. If they continue this for long, we will find no other way except asking them to leave the village and go anywhere they want. If they do not fulfil intentions for which we brought them here, I do not know why they should live here²²".

These narratives I have juxtaposed to discern what method we can choose to construct a history of Dalit assertion, to whose intentions we need to listen to and what axis around which we should weave the whole story of history. To decide on this if we go by the narratives alone we will not be able to be objective. So ethnographic method calls for a long duration of observation and participation of daily activities of the people to see whether there is any co-relation between what they narrate in words and what they do in action in their daily life. When you repeatedly ask the people about an issue more than once, you will be able to gauge truth and falsity of statements. Moreover, the narratives should be tempered by a multi-sited approach. To understand the Dalits' assertions about their past it is not sufficient to listen to them alone. Instead we need to look at their statements from the angle of the high castes to construct an authentic history by living with them. Apart from it, I also talked to the government officials who took part in settling the dispute to get their opinion on this. In addition, I referred to documents in places like Cheyyur parish records, Maduranthagam taluk or Kancheepuram district head office records and any other archives related to the topic. For instance, I studied the temple inscriptions in Uthiramerur that has some important information about land system in 14th century. In the whole process, I realised that the narratives by the Dalits seem to be truer, more objective than the others' narration and there are sufficient

evidences to it. Therefore, the whole project of history making begins from *observation* and *participation* in the daily activities of the people in Foucaultian sense. Later the recorded narratives are taken to different locales and persons to cross check for their authenticity, and finally, ethnographic writing should begin.

04. Concluding Remarks:

Few remarks will help embellish on how the Dalits in Papanallur narrate their history. The central concept around which the Dalits narrate, or construct their history is '*change*'. They see an innate connection between their past and the present social change they have to bring in. The resource material for the rebellion against the high castes is found in the past rebellion and they over and again re-enact/re-live the past to create a change similar to the past one. The past remains as a background against which the present is structured. Secondly, the change is brought about in and through *symbols* like religion and land, which were once used to marginalize the Dalits by the high castes. In the narratives of the Dalits, we find that they were the original inhabitants of the village but later occupied by the non-Dalits, which the Dalits want to reverse. First, they reclaim the land to assert their identity and later they free themselves from oppressive religion. By doing so, the change is, from their point of view, profound and long lasting. The by-product of all this is *conflict* between two communities. In this way narrating their history means to recall the past conflicts to justify the status quo. To comprehend how the subaltern like the Dalits narrate, view and construct their history I find the ethnographic writing of history is effective and more useful than other methods.

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- 1 The whole study is drawn on six-month fieldwork done in Kancheepuram district in general and in Pappanallur village in particular. I am indebted to the people of the village for their patience in answering my queries, and much more for their generosity in accommodating me in to their fold. A special word of gratitude to Rev. Fr. Jeyaraj Elankeswaran for introducing me to the villages of Kancheepuram and for his assistance during the study.
- 2 This innovative approach, if not accepted fully by all schools of anthropology, is evolved mainly by George E. Marcus of Rice University to make fieldwork tradition applicable to transnational research in the context of post modern critique of ethnographic writing. For more details see George E. Marcus, *Ethnography through Thick and Thin* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), especially pp. 179- 254.
- 3 I am using native's voice, Dalits' voice, subaltern approach and people's perspective as synonymous throughout the paper.
- 4 It is crucial point the project of *Subaltern Studies* used as against elite historiographies to recover the experience, cultures, traditions and identities of the subaltern groups. But I shall argue later in this paper that even the subaltern project failed to represent the subaltern voice in its entirety. For a comprehensive review and analysis see Vinayak Chaturvedi (ed.) *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (London: Verso, 2000) in which contributors' list includes David Arnold, Partha Chatterjee, Ranajit Guha, Rosalind O'Hanlon, Sumit Sarkar, and David Washbrook.
- 5 I realise it is highly complex and difficult to comprehend by sorting out exactly what the Foucaultian concepts mean and more so when we link them with constructionism. Mitchell Dean, to a large extent, succeeds in facing this challenge by discussing 'Foucault and constructionism'. See Mitchell Dean, 'Questions of Method' in Irving Velody and Robin Williams (eds.) *The Politics of constructionism* (London: Sage, 1998), pp.183-99.
- 6 Foucault's own terms are 'genealogy' and 'archaeology' which he employed efficiently to study prison, sexuality and mental illness.
- 7 See Gyan Prakash, 'Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography' in Vinayak Chaturvedi (ed.) *Mapping of Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*. (London: Verso, 2000), pp.163-190.
- 8 I use the term 'elite' in the sense of dominance. In this way I contrast it with the term 'subaltern' which means dominated.

- 9 Clarke's reference to written by K. Rajayyan, *History of Tamil Nadu: 1565-1982*, (Madurai: Raj publishers, 1982) is very important one which often do not find a place in histories, if it did it has been a marginal reference. In the 1960s publications of his books on the history of Tamil Nadu in terms of subaltern rebellion were path breaking in Indian historiography of Indian National Movement, cf. *Madras Musings*, March 1-15, 2001, p.5.
- 10 The writings of *Subaltern Studies* in the beginning were planned as a three-volume series to revise 'elitism' in colonial and bourgeois-nationalist historiographies. Though in its inception in the early 1980s was limited to history of colonial India later it went beyond regional and disciplinary boundaries. For a perceptive analysis of intellectual origins for subaltern project see Vinayak Chaturvedi's introductory essay in his edited volume *Mapping the subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (London: Verso, 2000) pp. viii-xiv.
- 11 George E. Marcus and his Rice University colleagues are doing pioneering explorations in terms of developing new modalities and uses of ethnographic research. See George E. Marcus, *Ethnography through Thick and Thin*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press).
- 12 James Clifford quotes in his book, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), p.51, about plural authorship. Donald Bahr, an ethnographer in his book, *Piman Shamanism and Staying Sickness*, there are three other authors who are Papago Indians about whom the ethnographer studied. It is a strong indicator that anthropology has moved, after post-modern, post-structuralist trend, towards a world of plural authorship in order to create a space for the subaltern.
- 13 I should confess that I have not applied all the elements of ethnographic method. It is obviously not needed in the present case study.
- 14 This narrative, by 92-year-old Dalit named Subrayan (Christian name is Thiruthuvam) was finalised after listening to eleven audio- recorded narratives of both individual and groups during my informal conversations with the Dalits of Papanallur village. For all narratives I had one single question: 'what is your relationship with the high castes in your village?' Invariably most of them spoke to me in terms of recalling the past to explain the status quo.
- 15 In this village as well as in nearby areas Vanniyars are called Goundars. In addition, at times the Dalits refer them as *palli*.
- 16 It means grazing fields reserved mainly for the cattle of the high castes.
- 17 It should have been 1941 or before, because the baptismal register kept in Cheyyur Parish gives that year of their baptism as 1942. so it should be at least one year before.

- 18 It is a part of Pongal festival in which the cattle, particularly cows and bulls are decorated with colours and balloons are taken around the village.
- 19 There are two schools in the village one mainly meant for the high castes and another for the Dalits that was initially started by Fr. Paul inside the colony but later shifted to new building outside the village.
- 20 Revenue/Rural Development Officer
- 21 This narrative is by Kannappa Gounder, who is in his 70s. I chose it to present because he seemed to know many details about the origins of the village and he is highly respected by all the high castes. It was an interview. I have omitted my questions for the sake of brevity and clarity.
- 22 The narrator never wanted to get into details of the incidents brushing it aside as not necessary. When I asked Kannappa Goundar to share about the event of 1941, he refused to answer my questions.

Whose Nation? Whose History?

Felix Wilfred

When an attempt is made to define the nation and its history, it raises the critical questions : Whose Nation? Whose History? Faced with the ideology of majoritarianism, marginal groups like the dalits and tribals raise such critical questions.

Defining India and its history is something like the definition given by an Irishman when he was asked what would be "*trousers*" - singular or plural. Loud and clear came forth the answer, 'It is singular at the top and plural at the bottom!'¹ The self-understanding of India and its history is undergoing today precisely this experience of singular and plural. But unfortunately instead of arriving at a balance between unity and plurality, the experience in the past decades at the political, cultural, religious, economic and ideological levels is tending strongly towards a *singular* view of India. Consequently what is projected, as *the* history of India is a history that presents itself as a view from the top, forgetting the plurality and diversity at the bottom.

We, as a nation, are today involved in a struggle for the past. This struggle in great part defines also our different conceptions about the nation. Even more, it portrays the conflicts of power among different segments of the people. The question of "historical objectivity" is giving place more and more to the question *who* interprets history and for what purpose. In this regard, we may recall here at least four events in the country in recent years which has sharpened the issue of historiography. First, conflictual readings of the past in confrontation of Ramajanmabhumi-Babri Masjid have sharpened the issue of

historiography. Second, the controversy concerning the transformation of the Indian Council of Historical Research from a scientific body into a bastion of ideology by sidelining all those historians who stood for the legitimate autonomy of their discipline and its methods. The third confrontation concerns arbitrary interventions in the re-writing of history text-books with political agenda.² Finally, the perennial question of the origin of the “Aryans” – an important site for contestation of power – has become the eye of a new historical storm after the publication of a book claiming to have deciphered the Indus-valley scripts.³

While the ideologues, politicians and historians are sharpening their swords for the battle, the plight of the suffering millions in this country should serve as a powerful reminder to get back to more basic and essential things. To all those who are immersed in the struggle for the past, the question raised by the victims of our society sounds: Do we the poor and the oppressed of the country have a future? The present article is an attempt to read the struggle for the past through the eyes of the victims of our society and to envisage a future that would ensure their survival and defend their dignity and rights. After going into the question of the interconnection between historiography and nationalism, the article focuses on the everyday experiences of the people as the new and realistic site for a historical reconstruction that would help create communion and community, peace and tolerance in the society. This is done through some ethical reflections in relation to the practice of historiography.

Part I: Historiography and Nationalism

History – the Mirror of the Present Moment

There are few grounds as effective as nationalism to test the complexities of the issues connected with historiography. Among other things, we come to realize what it means really to read the past to serve the interests of the present. This is not something peculiar to Indian nationalism. This is something we find in many other parts of the world. Whether the Western nations or the nations that emerged from the colonial rule in Asia and Africa, or societies as conflict-ridden as Sri Lanka, Ireland and Bosnia-Herzegovina or Palestine, we are confronted with widely differing perceptions of history and its narration.

Most historic narrations are occasioned by the condition of the society in which one lives. In varying degrees they reflect the problems of the present society and indirectly address the present concerns. When Edward Gibbon, for example, wrote his monumental work on "*The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*", his narration had as its backdrop the British society of his time. Between the lines we could read the concerns of his society. When François Bernier recounted his travel experiences during the Mughal Empire, it was as well a commentary upon the French Monarchy of his times. The concept of "Oriental Despotism" which gained much currency in the West and even adopted by Marx, had its origins from Bernier's account of the Mughal empire as despotic and absolutist. The cruel and barbaric regime is described as one in which people are turned into slaves and deprived of any ownership of land. The land is wholly possessed by the Monarch who oppresses the people through heavy taxation. The depiction of such a rule was intended to serve as a backdrop to compare in favourable light the French Monarchy and its supposedly benign rule.

The Construction of the Past

If history in general and national history in particular is read in terms of the present interest, it follows that what we have are different ideologically coloured readings of the past. The ideological element could be present covertly or overtly. In the matter of history as much as in nationalism, there is an element of "invention" "imagination" "construction". This explains the radical pluralism in the representation of history as well as nationalism. The inventive, imaginative and constructive can be accommodated within the discipline of history provided its (history's) method is respected. However, when the ideology and the perspective one adopts run counter to the very methodology of history, it forfeits any claim to being history. Often the borderline is very thin. We have such a case, for example, in the manipulation of evidence by the right-wing religious group in the question of the Indus valley civilization and its origins.⁴

In the Image and Likeness of Power

The ideological reading of the past serves concretely the cause of power. The category of power is quite central in understanding the difference between the colonial historiography and nationalist historiography. The aim of the colonial historiography was, by and large,

to justify the British rule and dominance over India. For this purpose, the colonizers tended to paint the darkest picture of the country and its past. The lack of any principle of unity in India and the Oriental Despotism were the two important underlying assumptions in this historiography. Both these assumptions served to argue the necessity of the British rule as something good for India. The well-known work, which was very much in vogue during nineteenth century, was the *History of British India* (1818) by James Mill, which saw several editions.

The colonial historiography which had as its agenda the dominance and rule over India should be distinguished from what we could call Orientalist History. Contrary to the colonialist picture of the past, here we have a glorious narration of the past bordering on romanticism.

For more than Jones, Colebrook concentrated his research upon Vedic India, and by the end of his career, he had devised a new composite image of the Indo-Aryan period as an age of gold. As with Max Mueller, who continued Colebrook's work, each discovery or rediscovery of Vedic India was dramatically and metaphorically contrasted with the peculiarities of contemporary Hindu society.⁵

The Orientalists discovered the nexus of Indo-European language nexus, and invented the common Aryan ethnic ancestry. The Orientalist approach to the Indian past, supported by Warren Hastings and by Wellesley and cultivated at the College of Fort William, was too weak to challenge the dominant colonialist historiography undergirded by power and its pragmatics.

Quest for the Principle of Unity

In more than one sense the nationalist historiography was a response of the Indian elites to the colonial narratives. The colonial depiction of the past of India triggered off the movement in search of a history of India, in which project they were assisted by the Orientalist depiction of the ancient times. 'We must have our history' became a strong motivating force. We can understand the resolve to find a principle of unity, if we read passages like the one of Andrew Fuller, describing the sheer impossibility of a united India.

"Hindoos [sic] resemble an immense number of particles of sand, which are incapable of forming a solid mass. There is neither

bond of union among them, nor any principle capable of effecting it. Their hierarchy has no head, no influential body, no subordinate orders. The brahmans, as well as the nations at large, are a vast number of disconnected atoms, totally incapable of cohesion.⁶

Whereas the colonialist historiography found nothing that could hold together so many regions and peoples, fragmented and divided as they were, the quest for a principle of unity became a very central concern in the project of nationalism and consequently in the reconstruction of nationalist history.

In the national historiography, the Vedic past and the glories of pre-Islamic India were extolled as defining the nation and its people. Very closely connected with this is a conviction that emerged through a widespread dichotomizing: It is the dichotomy of the *material* and the *spiritual*, the former being identified with the West and its culture, and the latter with India and its past. As Partha Chatterjee rightly points out, this polarization was at the heart of a belief according to which, even though India is conquered materially by the West, it is invincible in its inner spiritual core.⁷ This spiritual core was thought as something perennial and abiding. From here, it was easy for nationalism and nationalist historiography to take on a religious turn identifying these realities with the Hindu religious past – Hindu understood as a monolithic conception.

The nationalist historiography may not be described as a homogeneous concept. It was more like a continuum with views ranging from liberal and secular to radical right-wing religious. The ones who exploited to the maximum the contrast between the material and the spiritual were the right wing religious ideologues. Bakimchandra was the foremost champion of this brand of historiography.

Admixture of Religion and History

This history of the nation idealized, couched in elaborate rhetoric and nourished by religious animus became an important source and point of reference for the struggle for Independence. Furthermore, in the course of time, under the influence of the Western conception of history and the challenges of the Semitic religions and the Indian Sramanic tradition (Buddhism and Jainism), there came about within the Hindu tradition, the practice of locating the place of birth (*janmabhumi*) of the divine

avatars (like Rama and Krishna) and dating the time acquired importance. This does not seem to have been the case in earlier times.⁸

As we saw earlier, the quest for a principle of unity for the nation and its history was found by the religious nationalists in a past described as “Hindu”. For the ideologues of Hindutva, the land itself was characterized as holy (*puniyabhumi*). This category became the benchmark for national belonging in such a way that all those who do not have their holy land here – the Muslims and the Christians – were considered aliens. But then, as Diana Eck has pointed out in her insightful contribution, to the Hindus, the holy places – be that Ayodhya, Mathura or Tirupathi – are not similar to what Mecca is to Muslims and Jerusalem to Christians and Jews. She goes on to add:

The *mahatmyas* and *stalapuranas* of Hindu India’s thousands of *tirthas* do indeed extol and praise “this very place”, and even employ poetic license commonly called *arthavada* to amplify the greatness and glory of ‘this very place’. However, these are always set in the context of a wider peripheral vision in which *tirthas* and their *mahatmyas* are not unique, but ultimately numberless, limited not by the capacity of the divine to be present, but by the capacity of human beings to discover and to apprehend the divine presence.⁹

As a result, holy shrines, rivers and mountains are duplicated, multiplied and transported spiritually elsewhere – as far as United States! . It follows that the history of a holy place is not the same as the history of it in the Semitic tradition. This has great importance in the context of today when the right wing Hindutva forces are claiming their right to build the Ram temple in that very place of his birth, and where the Babri Masjid stood. Moreover, we need to remember that the imagined landscape of India is not one, but plural. There are varieties of landscapes and shrines connecting the whole country, depending upon the religious group or sect or the *sampradaya* one belongs to. This pluralist approach to the “sacred geography” challenges the definition of the country as sacred in the name of any one religious tradition.

The Unanswered Questions

The nationalist struggle for Independence did encompass masses of people at various levels. In this sense it was not exclusively an elitist enterprise as is often made out. However, in what concerns the

historiography, the overarching concern was to project a unified picture of the past, in which process the historiographical consequences and implications of the pluralist nature of India was sidestepped. More and more religiously oriented understanding of the nation gained ground. The creation of a homogenous Hindu religious identity was fostered by the competition for power, possession of resources, representation etc. This was capable of mobilizing the people for political ends. Today, we stand particularly before the challenge of re-defining both nationalism and historiography in relation to the marginal peoples and groups. The question they raise is: *Whose nation? Whose history?* To be able to come to terms with these questions, we need to migrate to another level of experience in historiography, which has great potential for enduring unity and peace.

Part II: Historiographies of Everyday Life

History as the Uneventful

Historiographies of everyday life have reference to peoples and groups who refuse to be objects of history but want to be the active subjects in creating their own narratives. But this history we are talking about is not the eventful ones associated with powers and thrones, but “*uneventful*” history of everyday life. At this level of history, the various communities and groups of the nation are united by shared experiences of life than by a homogenized past imposed upon them as if constituting their unity. The suffering and struggles of everyday and the day-to-day human inter-relationships continuously bring the victims together. The narratives of everyday human inter-relationships in the process of production and exchange bind the people together.

The experiences of every-day life and the narratives portraying them do not lend room to sharp divisions of the victims on the basis of religious belonging. In other words, in everyday life religion is not the primary, much less, the sole marker of identity overarching the wide range of experiences groups and communities make together. It is noted that about sixty percent of Indians are bilingual, if not multi-lingual.¹⁰ This is a sign that people have been communicating with each other all through the centuries in exchanging not only goods but also their cultures. Ascertainment of such simple facts as this is very significant to have a deeper perception of the fabric of the nation and its history.

The Binding Chord of Daily Life – Local and Regional

This unity and communion manifested at the bottom in everyday life should also become the point of reference for the real historiographies of the nation. We say “historiographies” because the nature of these relationships and bonds of communion and cultural exchanges have been different in different parts of the country. There is regional and local diversities in this regard with patterns and modes specific to each. It is in this vein also the history of the relationships among the religious groups is to be written. The communal historiography needs to be challenged by the innumerable examples of lived fellowship among the religious communities of the country. For almost two millennia the Thomas Christians of Kerala have had very amicable relationship with the culture and tradition of their Hindu and Muslim neighbours. They are of the soil and have been integral part of the social and religious fabric of the region. Susan Bayly has made a detailed study of the common bonds that held together Christians and Hindus, so also Muslims and Hindus in southern Tamilnadu. One such binding force was the fact of being under the same ruling dynasties that cultivated the system of patronage of holy shrines cutting across religious boundaries. The mixing and mingling in everyday life brought about shared narratives which, unfortunately, have not merited general attention.

Over long periods of time, there has been a tendency for groups and corporations to confront one another with growing hostility. At the same time, many of these links of syncretic religious practice or overlapping religious beliefs have persisted or even been re-invented. In the consciousness of many south Indians, Yusuf Khjan still presides from the royal seat at Madurai, St Francis and St Thomas still flame in majesty as divine healers and disease-bringers, and Hindus, Muslims and Christians and still mingle at the great cult festival of Tuticorin, Nagore and Velankanni.¹¹

The regional and local historiographies around daily life and practices offer a mine of resources which have far greater potential to gain a more complex and diversified historiography which has far greater potential for unity than the homogenized and monolithic history imposed by

vested interests.¹² In fact, there are “many places where what we have come to call Muslim’, ‘Hindu’, ‘Sikh’, or ‘Christian’ tradition through retrojective labeling of history have a lived-history and lived reality all their own in which devotion has not subscribed to the boundaries of what we call the ‘religion’”.¹³ We need to enquire more deeply also into the wide variety of ways in which in the different regions and at different ages people represented their own pasts.¹⁴

The Tragedy of Division

In another sense, for the marginalized like the dalits and the tribals, the experiences of everyday are marked by division, discrimination, humiliation and violence. It is symptomatic of the amnesia of daily life that one makes much of the tragedy of division by which Pakistan came into being, while there is silence over the many tragedies of caste and communal division and violence in the country. How could the victims feel part of a nation and a history when they know that in the ‘invention’ of nation and its history their experiences of daily life and their narratives of suffering do not become a part? How could the marginalized people be expected to conform to an agenda which they see as the project of the very castes and classes who continue to inflict suffering, violence and death on them on everyday basis? This social question of everyday life was raised by leaders like Jyotirao Phule and Ambedkar. Neither the colonial historiography nor the nationalist one was ready to incorporate these narratives of the victims in their representation of the nation. What dominated the historiography was the division on the basis of religion. It periodized this history identifying the ancient with the Hindu, the Medieval with Muslim and the modern with the colonial British.

With Phule and then Ambedkar’s writings on Indian history begins the construction of an ‘Indian nation’ or ‘Indian people’ not dominated by elite reinterpretations. ..In truth, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the high-caste elites of India had been constructing ‘imagining’ it as a Hindu community... While the Congress and the left secularists wanted to assert another ‘unity of India’ inclusive of Muslim and other religious tradition, and Gandhians wanted to reinterpret ‘Hinduism’ to allow for a significant reformism, both accepted

the elements of the framework. In particular, they took for granted the identification of the majority of people as 'Hindus' and the identification of the ancient Indian tradition as basically a Hindu one. This was expressed in the common framework of both British and nationalist historical writing....¹⁵

The caste question was something which the upper caste elites conveniently elided on the plea of unity. Many stratagems were invented to bypass this "embarrassing" issue, but they were more a cover-up than any attempt to face the rude ground-reality of division and discrimination in the name of caste.

I think these two perspectives of the unity manifested in daily life and the division created by caste need to be held together for a framework to interpret nation and history. This is important to overcome an imposed reading of Indian nation and history in religious and communal terms.

Non-Reified, Fluid and Porous

In this regard, we need to emphasize that the everyday practice did not refer to a reified religion. The reduction of the other to a religious stereotype is a modern invention. In earlier periods, those who are today referred to as "Muslims" were viewed not from the religious angle alone; they were spoken of as *Turuka*, *Yavana*, and *meleccha etc.* - designations indicating their ethnic, regional, cultural or other similar identities. This diversity itself is a sign that the nature and order of relationship among communities were not primarily religious, but a mixture of many identities. Similarly, there were different modes of reference to the various communities as we find in temple inscriptions and other records, as for example, the *valankai* and *idankai* division in medieval Tamilnadu. The services rendered and the donations made became the markers of identity. In any case, there was no rigid reification of identity in the pre-modern period, but a lot of flexibility and oscillation.¹⁶ All this is the reflection of a society in which people interacted at different levels. The reification of religious identity, on the other hand, is intertwined with a monolithically conceived nation and consequently its history.

This is exactly the point H.Oberoi wants to drive home analyzing the formation of Sikh religious identity. The central argument of the author is that the Sikh identity is the result of a reification of religion

which has taken place in the Indian society as a result of colonial impact. Sikh identity was fluid, porous and multi-layered, as demonstrated in the everyday life of the people and their religious practices. There was no undue concern to establish distinct Sikh identity and draw boundaries.

However, a dramatic change came about with the rise of Khalsa in the eighteenth century; sections of the Sikh population now consciously begin to push for a distinct and separate religious culture. Yet the growing hegemony of the Khalsa Sikhs did not put an end to religious fluidity within the Sikh tradition. Large number of Sikhs continued to interpret and reinterpret Sikh tradition differently from the Khalsa Sikhs, with the result that there was immense diversity within Sikh society for much of the nineteenth century...Most Sikhs moved in and out of multiple identities grounded in local, regional, religious and secular loyalties. Consequently, religious identities were highly blurred and several competing definitions of who constituted a Sikh were possible.¹⁷

History of Power

To be able to write the national history, it is important that the past is not read through communal eyes – dividing it in terms of religious identities – but also view the history as a *history of power*. The power and its acquisition and maintenance cannot be reduced to one referent – religious. There were other factors and considerations and logistics of power, which cut across communal and religious identities. We have, for example, Muslim kings and emperors depending on Hindu generals and chieftains for maintaining power. And these latter group of people for the sake of power allied themselves with the Muslim rulers. In this case, the consideration of religion did not figure. What mattered was power and access to power.

A similar observation could be made about the British rule. Though the rulers were Christians, it did not mean that all the Christians in the country were supporters of the British rule because the rulers happened to be Christians. As Amartya Sen rightly points out, even before there was a single Christian in Britain, there was already a flourishing Christian community in India – at least from the fourth century, if not earlier.¹⁸ Moreover, we have numerous examples of Indian Christians involving themselves in the freedom struggle.¹⁹ On the other hand, we have many

Hindus who submitted themselves to the views of the Christian rulers and believed like them that subjugation of India to the Christian rulers was something ultimately good for India. For them, all this had nothing to do with religion.

To this we need to add the fact that violence and persecution were perpetrated not only by one religionists against the other (Muslims against Hindus, for example). It was also the case within the various Indic religious traditions themselves. We have examples of violent conflicts and destruction resulting from the conflict between the Saivites and those of the Sramanic tradition. All this go only to confirm the fact that power was an important issue both in inter-religious and intrareligious relationships. What matters was the share of power and influence one was able to derive. What are presented as religious conflicts had other reasons, as for example competition for royal patronage, commercial rivalry, etc. If power and its expressions is an important category in historiography, then it is difficult to accept that the Hindu history is the thread running through the national history and uniting it. A history in which power is viewed as the running thread, would present to us a different and more complex picture of the past.

Stanley Thambiah tells us that the past should not be read in a monolithic fashion. He notes that the "imperial formations", contrary to the widespread impression, were not centralist or homogenizing, but had ways and means, structures and institutions to allow rich interaction among various groups and communities maintaining the diversity in everyday life of the people. It is this he finds missing in the right wing religious nationalism which stands for homogenization and centralization.

Imperial formations such as the Mughal empire, and others such as the Asokan, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires (and on a small scale the pre-colonial galactic kingdoms of South and South East Asia) were capable of violent wars of expansion and repression of rebellions and popular protests, but they did sustain to a notable degree the co-existence of, and transactions between groups and communities with different historical traditions, religions and languages, and socio-cultural practices.²⁰

This fluid understanding of communities and the factor of power present a very different approach to the past other than projected by the right-

wing religious nationalism. The Hindu nationalists vigorously oppose any liberal and Marxist orientation to history, and reject any presentation of Indian history that is reconciliatory between the Hindus and Muslims. For them, a history that speaks of the amity between the two communities is simply a cover-up for the actual history of barbarity and cruelty by the Muslims and their rulers against the Hindus. What the Hindu nationalists contend is that, instead of sweeping this brutal history under the carpet, it should be exposed. In sum, what the Hindu nationalists hold is that the Muslim community today should realize the dark pages of Muslim rule and the injustice and oppression suffered by the Hindu community. As a result, the Muslim community today should be ready to concede, by way of reparation for the past, all those things on which the hurt and wounded Hindu community lays claim. For example, the Hindu nationalists would expect that the site where Babri Masjid in Ayodhya stood could be handed over willingly by the Muslim community for the construction of a Hindu temple.²¹

The Uniqueness of Everyday

Historiographies of every-day life differ both from colonial and nationalist historiographies also in relation to its very approach to history as well as in the modes of its representation. The Western historiography acquired its modern character under the influence of the Enlightenment and its leitmotif of progress. Trained as the colonialists were in this tradition of history, they could not find anything that may be termed as history in the Indian heritage. Paradoxically, the nationalists who challenged the colonial negation of history themselves adopted unwittingly the Western conception of history in order to argue and demonstrate the historical consciousness in India. Given this situation, what were different modes of representing the past (epics, puranas, etc.) were metamorphosed and presented as history according to western canons.

The history of everyday life pertains to the realm of what Romila Thapar has called the "*embedded history*" in contrast to externalized history. The embedded history has the local or regional situation and its lineages as its point of reference, whereas externalized history has reference to state-formation. In the case of embedded history, local narratives, myths and epics were employed for specific purposes. That makes us realize the importance of the oral tradition and narratives.

The way orality and literacy are inter-related has necessarily reference to the concrete fact that we live in a world of domination and subordination with its consequences also in the modes of the representation of the past. These two modes bear the different class imprints. Orality is the language of the marginal peoples. Writing is the language of the centre and connected with the consolidation of power, whereas oral tradition is a culture of the periphery, of the subalterns, and a symbol of powerlessness. Non-literacy is the site of a large number of excluded subjects. We are in the face of collective subjects – peoples and communities who think, feel, act and interact in a basically oral milieu.²² The oral narratives of the past with its infinite varieties of expression challenge the “grand narratives” representing the past by the dominant groups and sections in the society. The dominant representation of the past leaves large gaps, though it is made to appear as a continuous narrative. It is the gaps and silences which speak a language which can reverse and radically alter the representation of the past and put in its place.

Part III: Historiography and Its Ethical Implications

Historiography is not only a matter of *epistemology* - objectivity, truth, falsehood etc; nor is it simply a question of *power*. We need to address historiography as an issue of *ethics*.

Ethics of Historian's Profession

Before we go into the various aspects of ethics in relation to writing of history, an important point needs to be underlined. Fairness and honesty demand that the historian or the narrator be faithful to the documents and evidence he or she handles. The manipulation of evidence is something very reprehensible; so too political machinations in order to gain for oneself a tailor-made history against all evidence to be thrust upon the rest of the people. Unfortunately, much of the present-day controversy touch upon this very basic point of probity and honesty in the use of the methods of the discipline. Romila Thapar describes the situation which raises important ethical questions.

History as projected by Hindutva ideologues, which is being introduced to children through text books and is being thrust upon research institutes, precludes an open discussion of evidence and

interpretation. Nor does it bear any trace of the new methods of historical analysis now being used in centers of historical research. Such history is dismissed by the Hindutva ideologues as Western, imperialist, Marxist... There is no recognition of the technical training required of historians and archaeologists or of the foundations of social science essential to historical explanation.²³

Historiography under Moral Reason

The underlying ethical question is to what end does historiography serve? We know that the reconstruction of the past is very much conditioned by the present interests and ideological positions. There is a strong element of constructivism in the representation of the past. There is no other way than to accept this fact in the enterprise of historiography. But that is no reason for skepticism or despair. We come out of the impasse and the conflicts of historical representations by posing the question of the *criteria* for interpretation. The validity of the key we use for representing the past will be the measure of the ethical appropriateness of the interpretation of the past. The key for interpreting the past could be power and domination, in which case what we have is a representation of the past to create communal conflicts and divisions, and to practice exclusion. This is a morally questionable practice of historiography.

Community- building: Interpretative Key

Historiography is to be viewed as a communitarian project. It has a serious responsibility towards the society. We can accept as ethically valid only those historiographies that assist the building up of communities and not those which foment communal conflicts. Therefore, besides the inner criterion of probity in the use of the methods appropriate to historical investigation, we need this external criterion of community building. Of course, this does not mean that the dark sides of the past are to be passed over in silence; but the point is that the ultimate goal in representing the past should aim at greater unity and cohesion in the communities and groups subsumed under the nation.

In this connection we need to underline that the ideology of *majoritarianism* poses a serious danger to an ethically correct and community-oriented historiography. The ideology of majoritarianism claims that the numerical majority (ethnic, religious, linguistic etc.)

has the right to regulate the order of the society and its functioning. In India we know how this kind of reasoning was occasioned by the introduction of representative politics in terms of religious identities – Hindus, Muslims, etc. This has been exploited by the right wing Hindu nationalism.²⁴

Making Way for the Stories of the Periphery

In any conception of nation as well as its history, it is not legitimate to bypass the issue of caste. This question has been deferred during the struggle for Independence and the voices of those who raised it were muffled. The conception of nation and its history to be ethically appropriate need to come to terms with this question. Neither the radical right wing nationalists, nor the secular nationalists seemed to have taken this into account.²⁵ According to Sumit Sarkar, even the so-called *Subaltern Studies* project does not seem to address the issue of caste. The question is to what extent the hierarchization of society and the caste discrimination within it have coloured and the representation of the past. How justly and fairly the traditionally excluded like the dalits are made part of the narration of national history.

The traditionally marginalized and excluded peoples of the nation have gained a new historical visibility in the context of what is known as Mandir-Mandal conflict. The issue of Mandir or the building of a Ram temple in Ayodhya is something oriented towards the past for the purpose of power for upper castes and classes, whereas Mandal represents the life-issues of the excluded and the marginalized of the nation. Concretely speaking, the shift from Mandir to Mandal would mean a significant ethical re-orientation as it takes up the cause of the discriminated groups and communities on a priority basis. The Mandal issue represents a question of life and survival, whereas the Mandir represents the agenda of power. The Mandal has its own narratives and stories of the people at the periphery. Ethically it is important that these stories and narratives of oppression and negation be brought to the consciousness of the whole nation.

2. There is another important reason why historiography cannot and should not be written simply from the angle of a particular religious tradition as if this tradition were one homogeneous block firmly fixed and unchanging. Two facts need to be recalled in this connection. First of all, there is plurality within the same religious community. To treat

religious groups in terms of stereotypes is to make the mistake of a “crude” classification and to put Aurangazeeb and Akbar in the same category of Islam.²⁶ When national history is written with religion as the point of reference, the aggrieved group sees in the “other” an enemy of one’s religion, and in this context what is pushed to the centre-stage are those misdeeds, invasions and cruelties. This is to forget the rich diversity within the religious group which one considers as inimical to one’s own religion. This homogenized view of the “other” is nothing but extrapolation of the homogenized view of one’s own religious tradition. When this pattern of homogenized view of the self and the other is dismantled, the room is created for a plurality of approaches in the inter-relationship among the various religious groups.

Moreover, we need to raise the questions of moral responsibility of the present generation for the centuries and millennia old deeds of those who belonged to his or her religious group. Communal historiography is so depicted as to reprimand as to impute responsibility, for example, on the Muslims of today for the past invasions, and on Christians for the British colonial rule. How could the Saivites of today be held responsible for its persecution of those of Sramanic religious tradition? This shows how ethical improprieties could take place when religions are reified.

Overlapping Identities

In the present context of the country, any national historiography to be ethically acceptable should respect the *overlapping of identities*. It is obvious that people have multiple identities. A person is at the same time a member of a particular family, of a class, age group, speaking a particular mother tongue and belonging to a particular religious tradition. If people are viewed as exclusively in terms of one particular identity – for example religious identity – the result is that what the particular person shares with others at various levels in daily life is lost. The dominant nationalist right-wing historiography unfortunately does not seem to respect the multiple layers of identity, and seems to reduce everything to the religious identity or to the cultural matrix of that particular religious identity as the beginning and as the end. The political programmes pursued is designed to further the interests of the community whose identity is made to appear as having existed in this from very

early times. This admixture of history with political ideology turns into a fodder for communal conflicts and confrontations.

Cumulative and Polycentric

An ethical approach to historiography calls for a different framework for interpreting the various groups and communities – belonging to different racial, linguistic, religious identities. A monolithic framework, which identifies the national heritage with any one single group – whether minority or majority – would be a false premise. The condition for an alternative historiography is created when the conception of nation and heritage is viewed *cumulatively and not monolithically*. By cumulative I mean to say that a nation has been in growth; like a snowball it has acquired in the course of time and through centuries new elements which all go to shape its identity. In other words, the nation is woven through many textures all of which go to form its identity. Instead, if some groups – like Muslims and Christians and others – are viewed as basically aliens tolerated in a nation defined monolithically, history also assumes a strong monolithic character.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we could profitably draw a parallel between history and language. In the study of language, we could concentrate on a diachronic approach by which we look back into the past to find out the etymology of the word. However, if language were to be reduced to the search for etymology, it cannot but be a poor specimen. In a system of language words have a synchronic function in as much as the words stand in relationship to other words, sentences, etc. It is in the relationship of the various parts to each other that we perceive the true meaning and semantics.

Similarly, a nation is not defined by those who claim to have its etymology – origin, the past. If a word, hypothetically, refuses to be part of the web of inter-relationships of the linguistic system, and claims to be defined in terms of its origin, we can call it only an anomaly. By this very posture it qualifies itself to be considered as obsolete, because it has refused to take into account the development through the centuries. As a linguistic system keeps evolving in which process the different constituents continue to affect mutually and change their place and significance.

Now, the anomalous situation is one in which the right-wing Hindutva ideology claims to have the right, on the plea of being majority and ancient, to define the whole nation, it claims to have the national etymology, so to say. The communities comprising the nation may have different backgrounds and origins. But the point is that today they are a nation *together*, and none of them could be excluded. It is in their mutuality and interchange that they produce meaning and significance of the nation. When the attempt is made to define the nation and its history in majoritarian terms, it raises the critical question : Whose Nation? Whose History? Faced with the ideology of majoritarianism, marginal groups like the dalits and tribals raise critical questions.

What we have attempted then is to shift the attention to the everyday life of the people and to break out of the frame of reference in which the past is created to serve a political, social and cultural agenda of domination. The interactions and transactions among communities on everyday basis present us a different picture of the past in which identities were not rigidly defined and the borders were open and flexible. Further the interactions among communities was never reduced to sole religious identity; instead there were many layers of identities with which to relate and interact. Besides, there were many regional and local narratives and histories. These have been very much part of the life of the marginal peoples like the dalits and the tribals. A reconstruction of the past taking into account all these aspects is the necessary condition for every segment of the people to make the nation and history their own. The reconstruction of history will go a long way to remove the alienation and exclusion being practiced today in the name of majoritarianism.

The everyday approach to the history of nation serves also to draw out the ethical implications of historiography. Besides respecting the parameters and the professional modes of historical enquiry – which is an ethical demand – the reconstruction of the past should have as its interpretative key the building up of communities. The social and communitarian responsibility on the part of historians is an ethical obligation as well. Consequently, the manipulation and exploitation of history for communal conflicts is an unethical practice. Any imputation of guilt and accusation drawn from an ideological reading of the past and leveled against particular groups or communities is not ethically justifiable and politically dangerous.

Finally, we are at the moment of re-defining both the nation and its history. We cannot allow the nation and history to be hijacked by any one single group, community or religion. To create a nation of communities is a long term project which requires new criteria and new terms of reference. For this project to take off and reach the goal, “*Whose nation? Whose History?*” is the critical question that should accompany us.

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- 1 The analogy is of A.K. Ramanujan. Cf. Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, Penguin Books, Delhi, 1999, p.6.
- 2 The National Human Rights Commission has challenged this attempt most recently by issuing notice to the Ministry of Human Resources Development and the National Council of Education, Research and Training (NCERT). The Commission invoking the Constitution, argues that in a democracy educational practice should be free and it should be exposed to various views and opinions. The educationalists “urged the Commission to ensure that the history textbooks writings were a truly transparent, professional and democratic process highlighting the secular, democratic, pluralistic character of India...” *The Hindu*, January 23, 2002, p.9.
- 3 N.Jha – N.S.Rajaram, *The Deciphered Indus Script: Methodology, Readings, Interpretations*, Aditya Prakashan, Delhi, 2000.
- 4 Cf. Michael Witzel – Steve Farmer, “Horseplay in Harappa. The Indus Valley Decipherment Hoax”, in *Frontline*, October 13, 2000, pp.4-14.
- 5 David Kopf, *British Orientalism and Bengal Renaissance*. The Dynamics of Indian Modernization 1773-1895, University of California Press, Berkeley – Los Angeles, 1969, p. 40.
- 6 As quoted by David Kopf, *op.cit.* p. 576.
- 7 Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments. Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993.
- 8 Cf. Romila Thapar, *Interpreting Early India*, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 69.
- 9 Diana Eck, “The Imagined Landscape: Patterns in the Construction of Hindu Sacred Geography”, in Veena Das et al. (eds), *Tradition, Pluralism and Identities* (Contribution to Indian Sociology: Occasional Studies 8), Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1999, pp. 25-26.
- 10 Dr K.S.Singh, former Director General of the Anthropological Survey of India, in a personal conversation with the author.

- 11 Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings. Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700-1900*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 463.
- 12 In this regard, Romila Thapar speaks of a different approach in earlier times. "Identities were, in contrast to the modern nation state, segmental identities. The nation of communities identified by locality, language, caste, occupation and sect. What appears to have been absent was the notion of a uniform, religious community readily identified as Hindus" *Interpreting Early India*, Oxford University Press, 1992, p.77.
- 13 Cf. Diana Eck, *art.cit.* p. 28.
- 14 Cf. Daud Ali (ed.), *Invoking the Past. The Uses of History in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1999.
- 15 Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution*, Sage Publications, Delhi, 1994, pp. 243-244.
- 16 Cf. R. Chamapakalakshmi, "Caste and Community in Pre-modern South India", in Felix Wilfred (ed), *Communities and Identity Consciousness, Jeevadhara*, no. 181, pp. 5-15.
- 17 H.Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*, Oxford University Press, 1999. From the cover page.
- 18 Amartya Sen, "The Right to One's Identity", in *Frontline*, January 18, 2002, pp. 6
- 19 One of my students is presently doing a doctoral research on the participation of Catholic Christians in the national struggle for Independence.
- 20 Stanley Tambiah, "What did Bernier Actually Say? Profiling the Mughal Empire" in Veena Das et al. (eds), *Tradition, Pluralism and Identity*, Sage Publications, Delhi, 1999, p. 242.
- 21 Cf. Yogendra K.Malik – V.B.Singh, *Hindu Nationalists in India. The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party*, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 232-234.
- 22 Felix Wilfred, "Orality and Literacy: Contrast, Convergence and Dialectic" in *South Indian Folklorist*, vol. 2, no.2 (1999), pp.7-16.
- 23 Romila Thapar, "Hindutva and History", in *Frontline*, October 13, 2000, p.16.
- 24 John Zavos, "Searching for Hindu Nationalism in Modern Indian History. Analysis of Some Early Ideological Development", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, August 7, 1999, pp. 2269-2276.
- 25 Sumit Sarkar, "Indian Nationalism and the Politics of Hindutva", in David Ludden (ed.), *Making India Hindu*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, pp. 270-293.
- 26 Cf. Amartya Sen, *art. cit.*